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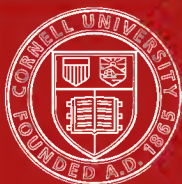
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**Theodore T. Munger, D.D.**

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# HORACE BUSHNELL

PREACHER AND  
THEOLOGIAN

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BY THEODORE T. MUNDER

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press, Cambridge*  
1899

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**Dedicated**

TO

**MRS. HORACE BUSHNELL**

And her daughters,

One of whom,

**FRANCES LOUISA BUSHNELL**

Died while this book was in preparation,

but not too soon to lend to it the

influence of her keen

insight and sound

judgment

¢





## PREFATORY NOTE

THIS book owes its existence to the fact that no full and connected account of Dr. Bushnell's work as a theologian has yet been made. He has been abundantly reviewed and criticised, but that full picture of him as dealing with the theological questions of the day, which his greatness and his influence deserve, has not been drawn.

Not many years after his death, his daughter Mrs. Mary Bushnell Cheney, with the aid of her sister Miss Frances Louisa Bushnell, prepared a biography with such grace of treatment and carefulness of detail that nothing more in the way of personal history could be desired, but it made no attempt to deal with his theological treatises in a critical and thorough way, though it shed light upon them at many points, by the closeness with which his life was depicted.

After an extensive sale its publication has been discontinued, and it is no longer to be found in the book market. But for this fact, I would not

have undertaken the preparation of the present volume ; nor could I have written it without an undue use of the earlier volume, so fully did that comprise what must enter into a proper study of the subject.

It was with the cordial sympathy and assistance of the family of Dr. Bushnell that I entered upon the difficult task of combining a biographical sketch with a critical analysis of his works.

I desire to make my most grateful acknowledgments to Messrs. Harper & Brothers, the publishers of "Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell," for their courtesy in permitting me to use freely whatever material I have seen fit to incorporate into these pages.

I would also acknowledge the courtesy of Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons, the publishers of the works of Bushnell, and of Mrs. Horace Bushnell, the holder of the copyrights, for according the same liberty to make extended extracts from them in the following pages.

T. T. MUNGER.

NEW HAVEN, *September 1, 1899.*

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## CHRONOLOGY

- 1802. April 14. Birth in Litchfield, Conn.
- 1805. Removal of family to New Preston, Conn.
- 1821. United with church in New Preston.
- 1823. Entered Yale College.
- 1827. Was graduated from Yale College.
- 1827-28. Taught school in Norwich, Conn.
- 1828-29. In New York, as Associate Editor of Journal of Commerce.
- 1829-31. Tutor at Yale College. Pursued Law studies.
- 1831. Entered Theological School in New Haven, Conn.
- 1833. May 22. Ordained Pastor of North Church in Hartford, Conn.
- 1833. September 13. Married in New Haven to Mary Apthorp.
- 1840. Invited to become President of Middlebury College, Vermont. Declined.
- 1841. Received degree of Doctor of Divinity from Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn.
- 1842. Lectured at Bridgeport, Brooklyn, New York, and Norwich, and gave Commencement address at Hudson, Ohio.
- 1845. Visited Europe in search of health.
- 1849. Hartford Central Association disscussed the book "God in Christ." Errors not found fundamental.
- 1850. Remonstrances and Complaints of Fairfield West Association to the Hartford Central Association upon their action in the case of Dr. Bushnell.
- 1852. Fairfield West Association again remonstrated in an appeal to the Associated Ministers of the General Association of Connecticut.

1852. North Church of Hartford withdrew from Con-  
society.
1852. Journey to the West, because of ill-health.
1853. May 22. Anniversary of twenty years' settle-  
ment over North Church, Hartford, Conn.
1854. Last measure adopted by Fairfield West Associ-  
ation addressed to General Association of New  
Haven, Conn.
1854. Protest of the Pastoral Union to the Pastors and  
Churches of New England.
1855. Journey to Cuba and the South, because of con-  
tinued ill-health.
1856. Life in California.
1856. Invited to the Presidency of the College of Cal-  
ifornia. Declined in 1861, after securing loca-  
tion, and rendering valuable service in other  
ways.
1859. Resigned from North Church, Hartford, on ac-  
count of continued ill-health, and against unan-  
imous wish of people.
- 1859-60. Life in Minnesota.
1860. Spent in part at Clifton Springs, New York.
- 1861-75. In Hartford, Conn., writing and occasionally  
preaching. Visits to the Adirondacks and  
elsewhere.
1870. Preached sermon at the Installation of the  
Rev. Washington Gladden, LL. D., in North  
Adams, Mass.
1876. Received message from Common Council of  
Hartford, announcing name of "Bushnell  
Park."
1876. February 17. Death in Hartford, Conn.
1876. Funeral sermon preached in Hartford by succes-  
sor, the Rev. Nathaniel J. Burton, D. D.
1876. March 26. Memorial sermon, preached in Chapel  
of Yale University by President Noah Porter,  
D. D., LL. D.

## PUBLISHED WRITINGS

- 1835. Sermon : "Crisis of the Church," delivered at Hartford, Conn. First sermon published.
- 1836. Article : "Revivals of Religion," included eleven years later in "Christian Nurture."
- 1837. Address : "The True Wealth and Weal of Nations." Phi Beta Kappa at Yale University, entitled "Principles of National Greatness" in pamphlet, and earliest of papers in "Work and Play."
- 1839. Address : "Revelation," before Society of Inquiry at Andover, Mass.
- 1839. Sermon : "A Discourse on the Slavery Question," at Hartford, Conn.
- 1840. Sermon : "American Politics."
- 1842. Address : "Stability of Change," Commencement at Hudson, Ohio.
- 1844. Articles : "The Great Time-keeper," in "The National Preacher." "Taste and Fashion," and "Growth, not Conquest, the True Method of Christian Progress," in the "New Englander."
- 1844. Sermon : "Politics under the Law of God."
- 1846. Article : "The Oregon Question," published in London.
- 1846. Sermon : "The Day of Roads," at Hartford, Conn.
- 1846. Address : "Agriculture at the East," delivered before the Hartford County Agricultural Society. Incorporated in "Work and Play" (in first edition only).
- 1847. Two discourses : "Christian Nurture," published by Massachusetts Sunday School Society.

1847. Article : "The Christian Alliance," in the "New Englander."
1847. Sermon : "Prosperity our Duty."
1847. Address : "Barbarism the First Danger." Printed by Home Missionary Society.
1848. Oration : "Work and Play," Phi Beta Kappa at Harvard University.
1849. Book : "God in Christ," prefaced by a dissertation on Language.
1849. Address : "The Founders Great in their Unconsciousness," before the New England Society of New York, on Forefathers' Day.
1851. Book : "Christ in Theology."
1851. Address : "Speech for Connecticut," at New Britain, Conn.
1851. Address : "Age of Homespun," at the Litchfield Centennial Celebration. Incorporated in "Work and Play."
1852. Lecture : "Revealed Religion," at Cambridge, Mass.
1853. May 22. Commemorative sermon, on the anniversary of settlement, twenty years previous, over the North Church, Hartford, Conn.
1854. Sermon : "The Northern Iron," at Hartford, Conn.
1856. Sermon : "Society and Religion, a Sermon for California."
1857. Address : "An Appeal : Movement for a University in California."
1857. Sermon : "A Week-day Sermon to the Business Men of Hartford."
1858. Book : "Sermons for the New Life."
1858. Book : "Nature and the Supernatural."
1858. Article : "California, its Characteristics and Prospects," in "New Englander."
1859. July 3. Sermon : "Parting Words," on occasion of leaving North Church, Hartford, Conn.
1860. Book : "Character of Jesus," being the tenth chapter of "Nature and the Supernatural."



1861. Sermon : "Reverses Needed," a discourse delivered on the Sunday after the disaster at Bull Run.
1861. Book : "Christian Nurture," published in present form.
1863. Article : "Loyalty," in "New Englander."
1864. Book : "Work and Play."
1864. Book : "Christ and his Salvation."
1865. Oration : "Our Obligations to the Dead," delivered at the Commemorative Celebration held in honor of the Alumni of Yale University who had served their country in the civil war. Incorporated in "Building Eras."
1866. Book : "The Vicarious Sacrifice."
1866. Address : "Training for the Pulpit," delivered at Andover Seminary, published in "Hours at Home," and afterward incorporated in "Building Eras," under title "Pulpit Talent."
1866. Article : "The Natural History of the Yaguey Family," published in "Hours at Home."
1868. Book : "The Moral Uses of Dark Things."
1868. Article : "Science and Religion," published in "Putnam's Magazine."
1868. Article : "Meaning and Use of the Lord's Supper," published in the "Advance."
1869. Article : "History of the Hartford Park," published in "Hearth and Home."
1869. Article : "Progress," published in "Hours at Home."
1869. Book : "The Reform against Nature," on Woman's Suffrage.
1869. Sermon : "God's Thoughts fit Bread for Children," before Connecticut Sunday School Teachers' Convention.
1870. Address : Commencement, Williams College.
- 1871-72. Series of articles on Prayer, published in the "Advance."
1872. Book : "Sermons on Living Subjects."

1874. Book : "Forgiveness and Law," afterward incorporated as second volume of "The Vicarious Sacrifice."
1881. Book : "Building Eras."

# **CHAPTER I**

## **EARLY LIFE**

“One comfort is, that Great Men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him. He is the living light-fountain, which it is good and pleasant to be near. The light which enlightens, which has enlightened, the darkness of the world: and this not a kindled lamp only, but rather as a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven; a flowing light-fountain, as I say, of native original insight, of manhood and heroic nobleness; — in whose radiance all souls feel that it is well with them. On any terms whatsoever, you will not grudge to wander in such neighborhood for a while.” — CARLYLE, *Heroes*, p. 2.

# HORACE BUSHNELL

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## CHAPTER I

### EARLY LIFE

CONNECTICUT may be called a mother of theologians.

Two Puritan divines, born in England, — John Davenport and Thomas Hooker, — laid the foundations of the State, and for a generation virtually governed it. In the next century Jonathan Edwards brought Davenport's theocracy to a full end, and enforced Hooker's theory of popular government. Edwards, the first of that group of theologians known under his name, or as the New England School, was born in 1703, and was followed by Bellamy, Hopkins, West, Smalley, and Emmons. A generation later came Lyman Beecher and the New Haven divines, — Taylor, Fitch, and Goodrich. Edwards the younger and President Dwight, — a grandson of the elder Edwards, — though born in Massachusetts, early became residents of Connecticut and prominent members of the school.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bushnell refers to this group of theologians in his address, "Historical Estimate of Connecticut," *Work and Play*, p. 215.

Its unity, if not its existence, was due to Edwards, to the fact that all were educated at Yale College, then primarily a school of theology, and, on the part of the later generation, that they were the pupils of President Dwight, whose brilliant and popular modifications of its theology captivated their minds. Deeper reasons doubtless may be found, reaching back of Edwards and below all personal influences. They represent a phase in the evolution of human thought and the divine progress of the world.

The relation of Horace Bushnell to this school will become apparent in the following pages. By local associations, by education and ecclesiastical ties, his relations to it were very close; close also in many ways were his religious habits and sympathies. If he is to be classed with it, it must be with wide exceptions and violent contrasts. But whatever his relation, it formed a strong and definite background upon which he stands out a clear-cut figure, not dwarfed by the greatness of the men behind him, and fit in all ways to be classed either with them or against them.

My purpose in this volume is not to give a full history of the life of Bushnell, but rather to follow its thread with sufficient care to get at the real character of the man, and more especially to ascertain his place among the religious leaders of America, his relation to the thought of his day, and his influence upon it.

He was born April 14, 1802, in the county and

town of Litchfield, Connecticut. The exact place where he first saw the light was the small village of Bantam, a mile or two from Litchfield, on the shores of a lake of the same name. His lineage on his father's side is traced to the first settlers of Guilford, Connecticut. Here, apparently, the family remained until the sixth generation from Francis, the first settler, when we find Abraham in New Canaan, near Litchfield, where he married Miss Molly Ensign. The second of their twelve children bore his mother's name, *Ensign*, and was the father of Horace Bushnell. The family is probably of Huguenot descent, and is marked by the best qualities of that blood,—mental alertness and religious sincerity. Ensign Bushnell and his wife Dotha, whose maiden name was Bishop, removed to New Preston, about fourteen miles from Litchfield, when Horace was three years old. Here he entered upon an inherited pursuit,—wool carding and cloth dressing by machinery,—to which he added that of farming. It was in this way that the more energetic people in the rural districts of New England often supplemented the hard conditions of the soil. It had much to do with the mental development of their son, that he was brought up in the atmosphere and exercise of two distinct occupations; it was an early lesson in that comprehensiveness which was the characteristic of his thought. He remained at home until he was twenty-one years of age. Up to that time he had been a hard worker in the factory

and on the farm; each was a special school for training eye and hand, mind and heart. The whole environment was the best possible for developing such a man as he was to be. The region is "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, springing forth in valleys and hills." The landscape is full of the peculiar charm of western New England scenery, — a tumble of hills, broken by occasional peaks higher than the rest, one of which is now known as Mount Bushnell, a winding lake, brooks rushing down from wooded crests through wild ravines, precipitous heights, dense forests, broad, undulating stretches of field and pasture. It is fortunate that one so open to nature and so receptive of its meaning should have been reared amid such forms of it, for it was inevitable that nature should play a great part in his thought. His deepest impressions did not come from books nor from contact with men, but from nature, and nothing was quite real to him until it had been submitted to its tests. Other influences — more consciously felt — mingled with these, and left an abiding impress upon his character. The homestead was on the slope of a broad-backed hill that stretched away for a mile to the summit, on which stood the only church in the town. The house was one of those which marked the best period of rural architecture in New England, — roomy, cheerful, and with an indefinable air of dignity, simplicity, and comfort, — character, in brief, in the terms of architecture. Just below



rushed a stream, the outlet of Lake Waramaug, a beautiful sheet of water, hidden by an intervening hill, but near enough to serve the ends of fishing and boating, sports which Bushnell followed all his days.

The religion of the family is described as "composite." The father imbibed from his mother, who seems to have been a woman of remarkable character, Arminian views, while the mother had been reared in the Episcopal Church. Both, however, became members of the Congregational Church. In such a family this variety of religious training and atmosphere stood for something, and its effect upon the son is beyond measurement, and can be traced through all his history, the two elements blending rather than antagonizing as time went on. It is a fact to be kept in mind that he was not reared under the influence of the strict Calvinism of the day. He was thus saved from an over-violent reaction, and when it came, there were within him places of refuge to which he could flee. The religious atmosphere of this home is well described by a younger brother, the Rev. Dr. George Bushnell:—

"He was born in a household where religion was no occasional and nominal thing, no irksome restraint nor unwelcome visitor, but a constant atmosphere, a commanding but genial presence. In our father it was characterized by eminent evenness, fairness, and conscientiousness; in our mother it was felt as an intense life of love, utterly

unselfish and untiring in its devotion, yet thoughtful, sagacious, and wise, always stimulating and ennobling, and in special crises leaping out in tender and almost awful fire. If ever there was a child of Christian nurture, he was one; nurtured, I will not say, in the formulas of theology as sternly as some; for though he had to learn the Westminster Catechism, its formulas were not held as of equal or superior authority to that of the Scriptures; not nurtured in what might be called the emotional elements of religion as fervently as some, but nurtured in the facts and principles of the Christian faith in their bearing upon the life and character; and if ever a man was true to the fundamental principles and the customs which prevailed in his early home, even to his latest years, he was."

The mother was in the communion of the Episcopal Church when Horace was born, and so he "had it always for his satisfaction, so far as he properly could, that he was Episcopally regenerated;" but the removal to New Preston took the family into the Congregational Church, — there being no other, — where a strict Calvinism prevailed. The father often protested against the "tough predestinationism, and the rather overtotal depravity of the sermon," but was checked by the wife, though in sympathy with her husband, "for the sake of the children." Both entered heartily into the life of the church, accepting what seemed to them good, and getting along as

well as they could with the rest. Here we have a foreshadowing of the history of the son, — protest of mind and heart against intolerable doctrines, and acceptance of what was intermingled with them, but was deeper and higher, and refusal to tear them asunder “because of the children” of the Kingdom.

He writes of his mother with tender reverence and keen analysis : —

“She was the only person I have known in the close intimacy of years who never did an inconsiderate, imprudent, or any way excessive thing that required to be afterwards mended. In this attribute of discretion she rose even to a kind of sublimity. I never knew her give advice that was not perfectly justified by results. Her religious duties and graces were also cast in this mood, — not sinking their flavor in it, but having it raised to an element of superior, almost divine, perception. Thus praying earnestly for and with her children, she was discreet enough never to make it unpleasant to them by too great frequency. She was a good talker, and was often spoken of as the best Bible teacher in the congregation ; but she never fell into the mistake of trying to talk her children into religion. She spoke to them at fit times, but not nearly as frequently as many mothers do that are far less qualified. Whether it was meant or not, there was no atmosphere of artificially pious consciousness in the house. And yet she was preaching all the time by her mater-

nal sacrifices for us, scarcely to be noted without tears.

“Whether she had any theory for it, I do not know; but it came to pass, somehow, that while she was concerned above all things to make her children Christian, she undertook little in the way of an immediate divine experience, but let herself down, for the most part, upon the level of habit, and condescended to stay upon matters of habit, as being her humanly allotted field, only keeping visibly an upward look of expectation, that what she may so prepare in righteous habit will be a house builded for the occupancy of the Spirit. Her stress was laid thus on industry, order, time, fidelity, reverence, neatness, truth, intelligence, prayer. And the drill of the house in these was to be the hope, in a great degree, of religion. Thus, in regard to the first, industry, there was always something for the smallest to do, — errands to run, berries to pick, weeds to pull, earnings all for the common property, in which he thus begins to be a stockholder. So for both sexes and all sizes; and how very close up to the gateway of God is every child brought who is trained to the consenting obedience of industry! Indeed, there is nothing in these early days that I remember with more zest than that I did the full work of a man for at least five years before the manly age; this, too, under no eight-hour law of protective delicacy, but holding fast the astronomic ordinance in a service of from thirteen to fourteen hours. So of truth; I

do not remember ever hearing any one of the children accused of untruth. We were not always perfect in our neatness, I confess, but we had abundant opportunity to be made aware of it. This habit-discipline, I scarcely need say, came very near being a gate of religion for us all. No child of us ever strayed so far as not to find himself early in a way of probable discipleship.

“If it should seem to any, in this little sketch, that our family discipline was too stringent or closely restrictive, they would fall into great mistake. There was restriction in it, as there ought to be. And yet, when I look back, I scarce know where to find it. No hamper was ever put on our liberty of thought and choice. We were allowed to have our own questions, and had no niggard scruples forced upon us. Only it was given us for a caution that truth is the best thing in the world, and that nobody can afford to part with it, even for an hour. Thus we talked freedom and meant conservatism, and talked conservatism and meant freedom; and, as we talked, we thought.”

We have made this long quotation because it reveals the personal equation in “Christian Nurture.” Powerful influences lay behind and around him. Ancestry, natural scenery, occupation, home, early training, a church life drawn from three sources, — well mingled by faith and good sense, — laid the foundations of his character and career. The mother taught him music, in the simple way it was then learned in a New England village, and so

put him early upon one of his profoundest studies. She also conceived and carried out for him the plan of a liberal education. This was a common thing in the respectable New England family of the day, but with her it sprang out of a prenatal desire that her firstborn son should be consecrated to the ministry of the Gospel. His education in its early stages is described in "The Age of Homespun,"<sup>1</sup> "a graphic delineation of life of the olden time that has become classic in New England literature."

Very early "the sense of power" awoke within him, and it never forsook him. He was good-natured, quiet, over-thoughtful, — qualities that were resented by the bullies of the school, but he resorted to the usual methods of boys to establish supremacy, and, selecting the strongest, in one vigorous conflict won respect and lasting peace. Later on he disclosed a more unusual trait, that was so characteristic as to be humorously prophetic of his future. When he was sixteen years old, the monitorial system was introduced into the Academy. On its coming his turn to serve, he declined both the honor and the duty, on the ground that he was there to study and not to watch other pupils. It was so all through. In some autobiographical notes written late in life he says: "I was almost never a president or a vice-president of any society, and almost never on any committee. Take the report of my doings on the platform of the world's business, and it is naught." He was not made to

<sup>1</sup> *Work and Play*, p. 368.

serve on committees, but to furnish materials for committees, who often found more than they could well handle.

In many other ways was the child the father of the man. He not only loved nature and suffered it to kindle his imagination, but he explored it for its meanings and mapped it out for its uses. He was a born engineer, always laying out roads and building parks, and finding the best paths for railways among the hills. The park in Hartford, which bears his name, was the fruit of a lifelong passion. When visiting Dr. Washington Gladden in North Adams, in 1886, he pointed out to him where the park of the growing town should be located.<sup>1</sup> Prophetic also were his early religious experiences. Heaven lay very close about him in his early years. The freshness of the morning moved him to prayer. His religious impressions came along the path of nature, — in the fields and pastures, — and so coming they were without fear or sense of wrong, but full of the divine beauty and majesty. Deeper experiences springing from the same source were to follow. Nature became a permanent factor in his thought as a revelation of divine things, — a feature in which he bears a striking resemblance to Edwards. As he drew near to manhood, he fell away, for a time, from

<sup>1</sup> The suggestion, unfortunately, was not followed, but the Congregational Church in North Adams is to be credited with the good sense and courage to invite Dr. Bushnell, when few pulpits in New England were open to him, to preach the sermon at the installation of their young pastor.

this natural piety into the dialectic habit of the day. When about seventeen, while tending a carding-machine, he wrote a paper, in which he strove to put Calvinism into logical harmony, and, in the interest of sound reason, to correct St. Paul's willingness to be accursed for the sake of his brethren. It was a natural and wholesome start, — a conforming conscience, which is a good sign in youth, and yet along with it a disposition to resent palpable or seeming absurdity; he will question and deny enough when older, and he will soon learn how St. Paul used language. When he was nineteen, he united with the church, and a deep flow of religious feeling attended the act. From that time his desire for a liberal education deepened, and he set about it with such zeal that a year later he passed the examinations and entered Yale College.

He left the home of his early days behind him for the field of a wider education, but the real education had already been gained; for in this home and in the world about it he had learned those lessons that he repeated in "Christian Nurture," and in all those pages where nature appears as an "analogon of the spirit."



**CHAPTER II**  
**COLLEGE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES**

“ Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,  
At last he beat his music out.  
There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

“ He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,  
He would not make his judgment blind,  
He faced the spectres of the mind  
And laid them : thus he came at length

“ To find a stronger faith his own ;  
And Power was with him in the night,  
Which makes the darkness and the light,  
And dwells not in the light alone,

“ But in the darkness and the cloud,  
As over Sinai's peaks of old,  
While Israel made their gods of gold,  
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.”

*In Memoriam, xvi.*

## CHAPTER II

### COLLEGE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

BUSHNELL entered Yale College in 1823, when he was twenty-one years of age, — a full-grown and robust man. The students at Yale enter as boys and graduate as men. This mingling of ages and a uniformity of methods form the chief infelicity of the American college, and cause most of those troubles that afflict both students and teachers. Bushnell's career bore the marks of a full-rounded manhood. That he was treated as a boy did not greatly trouble him, save once, when he led a rebellion against a doubtfully prescribed examination, and was sent home for a period, — a somewhat humorous proceeding in the light of his age and character.

His college life was marked by intellectual earnestness and "a wonderful consciousness of power." He led his class in athletic sports, — in the simple way of those days, — led it also on the intellectual side, worked hard, lived rather by himself, though not a recluse, and left in the college an enduring monument in the Beethoven Society, which he organized in order to lift the standard of the music in the chapel. His religious experience

was what might have been expected in such a man and at such a period. He was just in time to feel something of the receding wave of French liberalism that had pervaded the country. It did not cease to be felt until some years later, when it died out, not because its criticism was refuted, but chiefly because the Anglo-Saxon will not long live without a religion. Bushnell's experience partook rather of skepticism than of the reaction from it. He says: "I loved a good deal the prudential, cold view of things; my religious character went down." This was inevitable. It had begun, after the fashion of the day, under the fervors of the revival system, which he attempted to keep alive by a forced defense of Calvinism; but both fervor and logic disappeared in the cool and calm isolation of college life. The Christian nurture in which he had been reared remained with him and "kept him a living soul."

The following pen picture by a master in the art — N. P. Willis, a classmate — so well outlines Bushnell as a college student, and so keenly touches the secret of his method in dealing with opposite truths, that we quote it entire: —

"Seniors and classmates at Yale, in 1827 we occupied the third story back, North College, North Entry, — Bushnell in the northwest corner. As a student, our classmate and neighbor was a black-haired, earnest-eyed, sturdy, carelessly dressed, athletic, and independent good fellow, popular, in spite of being both blunt and exem-

plary. We have seen him but once since those days, and then we chanced to meet him on the Rhine, in the year 1845, we think,—both of us voyagers for health. But to our story. The chapel bell was ringing us to prayers one summer morning; and Bushnell, on his punctual way, chanced to look in at the opposite door, where we were,—with the longitudinal, straight come-and-go which we thought the philosophy of it,—strapping our razor. ‘Why, man,’ said he, rushing in and seizing the instrument without ceremony, ‘is that the way you strap a razor?’ He grasped the strap in his other hand, and we have remembered his tone and manner almost three hundred and sixty-five times a year ever since, as he threw out his two elbows and showed us how it should be done. ‘By drawing it from heel to point both ways,’ said he, ‘thus—and thus—you make the two cross frictions correct each other;’ and dropping the razor with this brief lesson, he started on an overtaking trot to the chapel, the bell having stopped ringing as he scanned the improved edge with his equally sharp gray eye. Now, will any one deny that these brief and excellent directions for making the roughness of opposite sides contribute to a mutual fine edge seem to have been ‘the tune’ of the Doctor’s sermon to the Unitarians? Our first hearing of the discourse was precisely as we have narrated it, and we thank the Doctor for most edifying comfort out of the

doctrine, as we trust his later hearers will after as many years.”<sup>1</sup>

Bushnell was graduated in 1827, and for a few months taught a school in Norwich. He found it uncongenial work, saying that he “would rather lay stone wall any time.” He had probably got somewhat away from his childhood, and had not gained that deeper sympathy with it which came later. His address at graduation led to an engagement in New York on the editorial staff of the “Journal of Commerce,” on which he remained for ten months, working incessantly and laying up stores of experience of utmost value. Finding it “a terrible life,” he withdrew from it, though invited to a partnership in the paper, and devoted a half year to study in the Law School at New Haven, where he gained further stores of experience that proved helpful to him, and which appear in several of his ablest essays, — notably in “The Growth of Law.” In these varied experiences following a solid course of study in college, and preceded by a long youthhood that combined farm labor and a skilled handicraft, Bushnell laid broad foundations for a career which, though intensely speculative and spiritual, ran close to daily life and reality. He left the Law School, intending to settle in some Western city, where he would find his way into the practice of the law and also if possible into political life. While at home on a

<sup>1</sup> From a letter in *The Home Journal*, 1848, which refers to a sermon preached by Dr. Bushnell in Cambridge.

farewell visit, he received an appointment as tutor in Yale College.

We quote his own account of this crisis in his life, both because of its importance and because it sheds further light on that Christian nurture which underlay his life and entered so deeply into his thought.

"I was graduated, and then, a year afterwards, when my bills were paid, and when the question was to be decided whether I should begin the preparation of theology, I was thrown upon a most painful struggle by the very evident, quite incontestable fact that my religious life was utterly gone down. And the pain it cost me was miserably enhanced by the disappointment I must bring on my noble Christian mother by withdrawing myself from the ministry. I had run to no dissipations; I had been a church-going, thoughtful man. My very difficulty was that I was too thoughtful, substituting thought for everything else, and expecting so intently to dig out a religion by my head that I was pushing it all the while practically away. Unbelief, in fact, had come to be my element. My mother felt the disappointment bitterly, but spoke never a word of complaint or upbraiding. Indeed, I have sometimes doubted whether God did not help her to think that she knew better than I did what my becoming was to be.

"At the college vacation two years after my graduation, when I had been engaged in law studies for a year, I was appointed to a tutorship. A

fortnight after reaching home, I wrote a letter to President Day, declining the appointment. As I was going out of the door, putting the wafer in my letter, I encountered my mother and told her what I was doing. Remonstrating now very gently, but seriously, she told me that she could not think I was doing my duty. 'You have settled this question without any consideration at all that I have seen. Now, let me ask it of you to suspend your decision till you have at least put your mind to it. This you certainly ought to do, and my opinion still further is' — she was not apt to make her decision heavy in this manner — 'that you had best accept the place.' I saw at a glance where her heart was, and I could not refuse the postponement suggested. The result was that I was taken back to New Haven, where, partly by reason of a better atmosphere in religion, I was to think myself out of my over-thinking, and discover how far above reason is trust."

He entered upon his tutorship in the autumn of 1829, and for a year and a half kept up his studies in the law, still holding to his purpose of entering that profession. But great experiences or rather developments awaited him. He might during this time be described as sound in ethics and skeptical in religion. Each is easily explained. The soundness of his morality was due to his nature and training; his skepticism was chiefly due to the theology in which he was involved. The revolt had come early; he resisted it, but as time



went on, his doubts grew into positive unbelief, which was held in check by his conscience. The change came — and there was need of it — in one of those revivals which occasionally pervaded college life in those days. This is not the place to discuss their nature or their value. Their roots go deep into theology and the later Puritan movement, into Biblical interpretation, and also, let us not hesitate to say, into the religious needs of men. They are not exempt from the criticism that can be visited on almost any phase or form of church life, nor is there need to draw a line as to the value of their results. They involved violent reactions, but they also drew out and set in motion great and abiding forces. These movements in Yale College were free from the excesses of those in the churches outside. Bushnell became a critic of the revival system, as we shall see, but he did not include in his thought that movement in college which brought so great a change to himself. It was in the winter of 1831 that this deepening of religious feeling began. We quote an account of it given by his fellow tutor Dr. McEwen, of New London, so far as it relates to Bushnell.

“What, then, in this great revival was this man to do, and what was to become of him? Here he was in the glow of his ambition for the future, tasting keenly of a new success, — his fine passage at arms in the editorial chair of a New York daily, ready to be admitted to the bar, successful

and popular as a college instructor, — but all at sea in doubt, and default religiously. That baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire compassed him all about. When the work was at its height, he and his division of students, who fairly worshiped him, stood unmoved apparently when all beside were in a glow. The band of tutors had established a daily meeting of their own, and all were now united in it but Bushnell. What days of travail and wondering those were over him! None dare approach him. He stood far more than *primus inter pares* among all. Only Henry Durant<sup>1</sup> tried carefully and cautiously to hit some joint in the armor. But even he, though free in his confidence, seemed to make no advance, when, all at once, the advance came bodily and voluntarily from Bushnell himself. Said he to Durant, ‘I must get out of this woe. Here am I what I am, and these young men hanging to me in their indifference amidst this universal earnestness on every side.’ And we were told what he said he was going to do, — to invite these young men to meet him some evening in the week, when he would lay bare his position and their own, and declare to them his determination and the decision they ought with him to make for themselves. Perhaps there never was pride more lofty laid down voluntarily in the dust than when Horace Bushnell thus met those worshipers of his. The result was overwhelming.

<sup>1</sup> The founder and president of the first college in California.

“When, then, he came at once into the confidences of the daily meeting of his fellow tutors, was it not Paul that was called Saul, and was there ever such a little child as he was? On one occasion he came in, and, throwing himself with an air of abandonment into a seat, and thrusting both hands through his black, bushy hair, cried out desperately, yet half laughingly, ‘O men! what shall I do with these arrant doubts I have been nursing for years? When the preacher touches the Trinity and when logic shatters it all to pieces, I am all at the four winds. But I am glad I have a heart as well as a head. My heart wants the Father; my heart wants the Son; my heart wants the Holy Ghost—and one just as much as the other. My heart says the Bible has a Trinity for me, and I mean to hold by my heart. I am glad a man can do it when there is no other mooring, and so I answer my own question, What shall I do? But that is all I can do yet.’”

The most interesting feature of this experience is that it turned on his sense of responsibility for others. He seemed to have no anxiety for himself, nor did he find his doubts an unendurable burden, though he was sorely perplexed by them. But the sight of his pupils awaiting his action in a matter of supreme importance overwhelmed him. Here was conscience at its highest, touching self-sacrifice if not one with it. All along his early life we find these forecasts of his later thought. In his solicitude for his pupils we have the germ

of "The Vicarious Sacrifice," and in his outburst of perplexity over the Trinity we find the discriminating principle that runs through all his treatment of that subject. In the main lines of his thought he was not an impulsive thinker taking up great subjects because he found them in the air or in books. All his contentions had root, not so much in his thought, as in his nature. He reviewed and recast his superficial opinions, but he never let go of the general principles that underlie his works. Bushnell always regarded this experience as the most important crisis in his life. Later on one equally great came in his thought, but it in no way lessened the significance of the first. It was strikingly like that through which Frederick W. Robertson passed in the Tyrol when tossed by doubt over the same questions.<sup>1</sup> Each was reduced to the almost sole belief that "it must be right to do right;" each clung to the "grand, simple landmarks of morality," and so at last found his way into a fuller faith. Bushnell gives an account of his experience at this time in a sermon on "The Dissolving of Doubts," preached in the chapel of Yale College.

This sermon — one of his ablest and most self-revealing — closes with six points, which indicate the path along which he traveled at this time and for years after: —

"Be never afraid of doubt.

"Be afraid of all sophistries, and tricks, and strifes of disingenuous argument.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of F. W. Robertson*, vol. i. p. 109.

“Have it a fixed principle, also, that getting into any scornful way is fatal.

“Never settle upon anything as true because it is safer to hold it than not.

“Have it as a law never to put force on the mind, or try to make it believe.

“Never be in a hurry to believe; never try to conjure doubts against time.”

His reconversion, if such it should be called, was a conversion to duty rather than to faith, but he made the discovery that faith could wait, but duty could not. Through this simple principle he found his way not only into a full faith, but into the conception of Christianity as a life, — Christ himself rather than beliefs about Christ, a distinction which, if not then seen in its fullness, is implied in all his writings.

His law studies were completed, but he turned to the ministry. In the summer of 1831 he took leave of his pupils in an address full of practical wisdom, and indicating that his own habits of thought were fully formed. He left with them “two rules which ought to govern every man.” The first is, “Be perfectly honest in forming all your opinions and principles of action.” The other is, “Never to swerve in conduct from your honest convictions.” He clinched this advice by saying, “If between them both you go over Niagara, go!”

This strenuous advice was probably borrowed from Dr. Taylor, who was soon to become his

instructor in theology ; it was often heard in his lecture-room, and it well represented the spirit of that stout champion of the "new divinity." There are few pupils of this great teacher who would not confess their deep indebtedness to him, but the emphasis of their gratitude would fall on the courage and honesty and thorough nobility of the man himself. He was a great teacher because he was a great man ; and he was the teacher fitted for the time because what was needed was not more a new theology than courage and an independent habit of thought.

These qualities were abundantly nurtured in the lecture-room of Dr. Taylor, and there was also cherished a breadth of view and a charity not common in those days. As a teacher he was far ahead of his age. In no other school of theology were lectures closed with the uniform remark, "Now, young gentlemen, I will hear you." It was often the preface to another session of an hour or even two, in which teacher and pupils were man to man with all the give and take of close argument, or in the closer contact of a noble and generous nature pouring himself out upon sympathetic and responsive pupils. In argument he always won, though sometimes leaving them unconvinced, but in the spirit he infused into them his victory was total and permanent.

Bushnell fell into the spirit of the lecture-room ; it fed and fortified his sincerity and courage and independence of thought. But when it came to

the thought itself, he parted company with his teacher, and went his own way. He had begun to read Coleridge's "Aids to Reflection." The theology of the day failed to satisfy him, and he had already learned to look for truth from certain sources and by certain methods that had small recognition by his teacher. As the subject will come up in the next chapter, we will only say that his theological studies in New Haven chiefly served to furnish a background against which all his thought and work in after years stand out in vivid contrast. It was not a contrast between the two men; it was between two ways of reasoning and two methods of discovering truth; a contrast between an old world drawing to a close and a new world coming on.

When examining for a license to preach, he read a thesis on the methods of natural and moral philosophy, in which he contended that systematized knowledge is possible in the former "because nature is a system in which everything fulfills its end," but impossible in the latter "because a great share of the acts of men are in contradiction of those properties of their constitution which fit them for the end proposed in the end of their existence." Here we find the germ of "Nature and the Supernatural," which appeared thirty years later.





**CHAPTER III**  
**THE THEOLOGICAL SITUATION**

“Tertullian was a Sophist in the good and had sense of the term. He was in his element in Aristotelian and Stoic dialectics; in his syllogisms he is a philosophizing advocate. But in this also he was the pioneer of his Church, whose theologians have always reasoned more than they have philosophized. The manner in which he rings the changes on *auctoritas* and *ratio*, or combines them, and spins lines of thought out of them; the formal treatment of problems, meant to supply the place of one dealing with the matter, until it ultimately loses sight of aim and object, and falls a prey to the delusion that the certainty of the conclusion guarantees the certainty of the premises — this whole method, only too well known from mediæval Scholasticism, had its originator in Tertullian. In the classical period of eastern theology men did not stop at *auctoritas* and *ratio*; they sought to reach the inner convincing phases of authority, and understood by *ratio* the reason determined by the conception of the matter in question.” — HARNACK, *History of Dogma*, vol. v. p. 17.

## CHAPTER III

### THE THEOLOGICAL SITUATION

IN the year 1833 Bushnell was ordained pastor of the North Church in Hartford. He had lingered in New Haven during the autumn and winter until February, when he received an invitation to preach for a time with a view to settlement. His introduction to the church is graphically described in a sermon preached on the twentieth anniversary of his installation, which shows how he was plunged at once into the sea of New England theology, that never was at rest, and never more turbulent than at that time.

“I arrived here late in the afternoon in a furious snowstorm, after floundering all day in the heavy drifts the storm was raising among the hills between here and Litchfield. I went, as invited, directly to the house of the chairman of the committee; but I had scarcely warmed me, and not at all relieved the hunger of my fast, when he came in and told me that arrangements had been made for me with one of the fathers of the church, and immediately sent me off with my baggage to the quarters assigned. Of course, I had no complaint to make, though the fire seemed very inviting and the house attractive; but when I came to know the hospitality of

my friend, as I had abundant opportunity of knowing it afterwards, it became somewhat of a mystery to me that I should have been dispatched in this rather summary fashion. But it came out, three or four years after, that, as there were two parties strongly marked in the church, an Old and a New School party, as related to the New Haven controversy, the committee had made up their mind, very prudently, that it would not do for me to stay even for an hour with the New School brother of the committee; and for this reason they had made interest with the elder brother referred to, because he was a man of the school simply of Jesus Christ. And here, under cover of his good hospitality, I was put in hospital and kept away from the infected districts preparatory to a settlement in the North Church of Hartford. I mention this fact to show the very delicate condition prepared for the young pastor, who is to be thus daintily inserted between an acid and an alkali, having it for his task both to keep them apart and to save himself from being bitten of one or devoured by the other."

Bushnell so well fulfilled the mediating part in this clever scheme that he avoided criticism from either side, and after preaching six Sundays, was unanimously called to the pastorate. His ordination took place on the 22d of May, no difficulties having been encountered in the preliminary examination. Evidently the force and character of the man conquered a critical situation.

On the 13th of September, 1833, he was married in New Haven to Mary Apthorp, a lineal descendant of John Davenport, the first minister of New Haven. By nature and by culture she was well fitted to share the life of the young pastor. Her high womanly qualities tempered his somewhat undisciplined force, and her spirituality furnished the atmosphere by which his own was steadily fed. He is never to be regarded apart from the influence that constantly flowed in upon him from her strong personality. They spent a few weeks in New Preston, and then entered upon their united labors in Hartford.

Bushnell's theological career began so early in his ministry that it is impossible to understand it without taking a view, though necessarily a partial one, of the theological situation. In general terms it might be described not as a decadent but as a critical period in the life of the churches. There was intense activity, but it was largely the activity of antagonism. A long process had reached a point where it could go no further. The New England theology had worn itself out by the friction of its own conflicting elements. Edwards was no longer a name to conjure with. The main current of his influence had gone to feed an intellectual idealism, and his specific theology had been "improved" under so many hands and into so many differing forms that it could hardly be recognized. The general criticism to be made upon Edwards' work, as a whole, is that his

avowed purpose was the overthrow of an alleged heresy. He thus incurred the inevitable weakness of the negative method. He assumed that if Arminianism were overthrown, Calvinism would hold the ground. The mistake was a fatal one, because it substituted controversy for investigation. The search was not for the truth, but for the error of the enemy, who in almost any theological controversy holds enough truth to embarrass the other side. As to the intellectual greatness of Edwards there can be as little doubt as of his exalted piety, but his life-long contention was for a system that subdued the nobler elements of his nature in order to make room for the logic of his system. One cannot read the Enfield sermon without feeling its moral degradation, however outweighed by the end in view and the nobility of that end. The same may be said of the doctrine of preterition; it was simply inhuman. It was a contention that grew weaker under every effort made to uphold it; that only darkened when it sought to clarify; that enchanted great minds into following only to lead them into mutual antagonisms and finally to destruction at each other's hands. This is one of those pages in church history that would puzzle, if its frequency did not indicate that it is along such paths the church pursues its way, and society itself unfolds. But no less does it show that a system which springs out of and reflects a certain phase of society emerges from that phase and enters upon another.

Edwards was not contending against the self-determining power of the will, but against an impersonal force that had begun to press upon the minds of men ; namely, modern thought. His followers were in one sense not followers. They stood by his system of slightly modified Calvinism as a whole, but shrank from some of its applications and inferences ; and they also criticised his metaphysics. He was great enough to throw off any number of satellites as he revolved in his vast orbit, but all of them stayed within the system. Bellamy, Hopkins, Emmons, the younger Edwards, Dwight, Taylor, — all agreed upon Arminianism as a common enemy, and strove to mend what they conceived to be defects in their great protagonist. Their writings are a strange mixture of dignity and triviality, of truism and absurdity ; often they are on the threshold of the greatest truths, and then we find them wandering in barren wastes of mere speculation. Metaphysical conceptions, as in the early Greek Church, came to occupy relatively the same place which conceptions of natural science occupy at the present day ; that is, as being the truth of God instead of one of the ways of reaching it.<sup>1</sup>

Bellamy contended that the world is more holy and happy than if sin and misery had never entered it.

This doctrine was popularly known as “ Sin the

<sup>1</sup> See Hatch's *Influence of Greek Ideas on the Christian Church*, p. 13.

necessary means to the greatest good." The New England divines struck an undoubted truth in this disposition of moral evil, but they did not know what to do with it. What they saw was a universal and probably fundamental law; namely, evil, or seeming evil, the condition of all progress. They did not see the universality of the law, and so shut it up to theology, and treated it dialectically, bringing up in confusion, if not blasphemy. Dr. Taylor, in his zeal to save the character of God, said that sin was *incidental*, not necessary, and thus saved himself from saying that God was the author of sin. Hopkins was quite as near right as Taylor; both had laid hold of the skirts of a great truth, but knew little of its reach and place in the divine economy. It was a subject which Christ waived; but the New England theologians waived nothing.

Bellamy was followed by Hopkins, who modified certain features of the system, such as imputation and a covenant with Adam, and made them less obnoxious. Starting with Edwards' unimpeachable definition of virtue as "love of being in general," Hopkins draws out, by a purely logical process, — as faultless as it is unconvincing, — the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, or, when practically stated, willingness to become a cast-away, if the glory of God should require it. It was held not only as a speculative doctrine, but as a test of character.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The last appearance of the doctrine in public was at a Congre-



The conception indicates a kind of sacred chivalry, but so far as it had acceptance, it worked immeasurable evil, — misery in those who believed it, and hypocrisy in those who did not formally assent to it. Emmons held that God, being Universal Cause, is the cause of sin, and that the soul is a series of exercises, — a marvelous lapse into a form of pantheism. The younger Edwards stood stoutly by Divine Sovereignty, but made room for the Grotian theory of the Atonement, and corrected his father's treatment of the Will.

President Dwight disagreed with these leaders in theology, not incorrectly finding in them traces of pantheism. He asserted the freedom of the will, defined sin as selfishness, rejected imputation, and advocated the use of means, which had been held to be wicked. All these theologians agreed and disagreed with Edwards and with each other, but all were fairly good Calvinists. They called their disagreements "improvements," but while they were thus defending the theology of their great leader with a noble fidelity, they did not see that they were paving the way for Arminianism, to the extermination of which he devoted his life. Every step had been a losing process, but

gational Council called to ordain the late Dr. John Lord, well known as a lecturer and writer on history. In the course of the examination, which had been somewhat harassing, a surviving Hopkinsian asked the candidate, — using the rough and popular form of the question, — if he was willing to be damned for the glory of God. The reply was that personally he was not, but he was willing the Council should be.

not until Dr. N. W. Taylor made his unqualified assertion of the self-determining power of the will did it become clearly apparent that the Arminian postulate had found its way into the citadel of Calvinism. Dr. Taylor resented this conclusion, but whether true or not, it was near enough to the truth to become the occasion of as intense a theological war as the nineteenth century is capable of. It was into such a world as this that Bushnell entered when he began his studies in theology.

The careers of Taylor and Bushnell ran side by side for many years. The relation between them was close, but it was not sympathetic. Bushnell entered the Divinity School at New Haven in 1831. Three years before, Dr. Taylor had preached a *concio ad clerum*, in which he made clear his views on the point to which we have just alluded. It called out a criticism that led to the widest breach within orthodox lines that New England had ever experienced. It divided churches, and led to the creation of a theological seminary, whose chief vocation for years was the defense of previous views of the will and cognate doctrines, as against the views of Dr. Taylor, which it stigmatized as Arminian. Dr. Taylor stood his ground with splendid courage, quite ready to "go over Niagara," if his logic led in that direction; for he, too, defended the system by logic, and was the keenest dialectician since Edwards, over whom he claimed superiority by asserting that "a dwarf standing on a giant's shoulders can see further than the giant." He

was surrounded by men of ability, and his pupils in class-room and pulpit sustained him with the enthusiasm of personal admiration and doctrinal sympathy. There are still living some who respond to one if not to the other. It was the noblest period in the history of New England theology. Something of the spirit of the new-found freedom pervaded the region, and the sense of accountability that sprang from it gave an impulse to Christian living that is not yet spent.

It might have been expected that Bushnell would fall into this company and march with it. There was much in Dr. Taylor to command his admiration. His courage was as fine as that which Bushnell afterward displayed, though drawn from different sources. Each was brave by nature, but Taylor rested with absolute repose on his logic, while Bushnell fell back, with like confidence, on his insight and experience. Dr. Taylor's position also as an independent thinker and a progressive theologian, who had made a positive advance toward rational and practical views of religion, must have won the respect of the pupil. Both were men of a generous and chivalric disposition, and of absolute honesty and sincerity. But with all these grounds for sympathy, the teacher failed from the first to get any hold upon the pupil, or even to interest him. A partial explanation is to be found in the fact that the path by which Bushnell had reached his present position was not along the highway of Calvinism. He had sunk

deep in the slough of skepticism, and when he emerged, he did not return to that which plunged him into it. He had been delivered by his heart, and henceforth he was to be guided by his heart, and not by the logic that filled the air about him. From the first he had been an alien to the school of Edwards. He was not born under its star, nor did he serve in its house except as by chance. Its method was one for which he had no aptitude and felt little interest, — a steady dialectic play upon a theology defended, modified, taught, preached, and applied by formal logic. By logic is not meant that action of the mind which is the reasoning voice of the whole nature, and that agreement of thought with facts which insures consistency; but rather that use of definition and syllogism upon infinite subjects which enforces assent, — such as led Professor Jowett to say that “it is not a science, nor an art, but a dodge.” Dr. Taylor did not fall short of his predecessors in dialectics, and was as stout a logician as any of them. Some of his later students remember his naïve account of a theological bout with Dr. Lyman Beecher, in which he (Taylor) contended that a single sin, however small, deserved everlasting punishment.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Taylor's contention might seem to have the justification of Socrates' remark, “God may forgive sin, but I do not see how He can;” but the remark of the Greek was based on the course of nature in its outward processes, while Dr. Taylor's was based on an implied limitation of the power of God under his own moral government. Socrates felt the possibility of the divine transcendence; Taylor believed it, but made little allowance for it; both wandered in “the twilight of the gods.”

It is easy to see that a teacher who should even raise such a question could have little influence over such a man as Bushnell. They were not within hailing distance, hardly on the same side of the planet. Hence, as often has happened in New England, the theological teacher and his brightest pupil parted company. Taylor could only see in Bushnell one who was "always on t' other side;" though he sufficiently felt the force of his book, — "God in Christ," — to rewrite at great length his lectures on the Trinity, — perhaps the most carefully wrought out and the least valuable of his works. He could not understand Bushnell, who not only understood him, but so reacted from his teachings that he began to think on absolutely opposite lines. The reaction drove him into the region where his chief work was done. In his thesis at graduation we have the germ and not a little of the form of "Nature and the Supernatural;" and in another essay, written at about the same time, we find the outline of his theory of language. These essays are interesting as showing how fundamental was his dissent from the methods of his teacher, and also as pointing the way he was going. They are also prophetic of his own method, — a careful adjustment between destruction and construction, with strong emphasis on the latter. It may be said at the outset that Bushnell took nothing away from theology without restoring fourfold; he was always and in all ways a builder. But while he

was out of sympathy with his teacher, he was more indebted than he knew. They never in after years actually crossed swords in debate, but each often had the other in mind in many a pungent page and pointed paragraph. If either was lacking in respect for the other, it was not Bushnell. Dr. Taylor could not understand this strange fledgeling of his theological nest, and despised its vagrant ways, but the pupil did not forget the few nourishing crumbs he had received from his master's hands. It was the familiar story, — the old intolerant of the new, and the new out-thinking the old.

Several years later (1844) a singular controversy was going on, or rather raging, in New England over a question involving the anti-slavery movement. It was made up of practical politics and theological subtleties of a Jesuitical hue, as that the end justifies the means, — a variation of the Hopkinsian doctrine that sin may be the necessary means of the greatest good. The question at first was whether it is right to vote for either a duelist or an oppressor of the poor for the presidency. It was aimed at a Southern candidate, who was both a duelist and a slaveholder. Under Dr. Taylor's hand the question was resolved into this form: "If two devils are candidates for the office, and the election of one is inevitable, is it not one's duty to vote for the least, in order to secure the greater good?" He contended that if this is not done, one becomes responsible for the

evil wrought by the greater devil. Bushnell controverted this position in "The Christian Freeman" (December 12, 1844), in an article of four columns, lifting the question out of the region of temporary expediency into that of morals. His main point was that to vote for bad men under the stress of such a principle would be to organize immorality into the life of the nation, and so fail of the greater good. The question was a weak one, but full of mischief. Bushnell's treatment of it was masterly. It is not contained in his collected writings, but nothing that he said on political subjects was more timely and effective. Taking a petty question for a text, he wrote a paper on the nature and authority of civil government. The point he made underlay the anti-slavery movement, the resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law, the outcry of the North against Webster's 7th of March speech, and entered into the thought that issued in the Free Soil party. He taught the people that the only way to secure the greatest good was along the path of absolute righteousness, and not in vain attempts to measure consequences. Dr. Taylor maintained that consequences create duty, a principle that determined political action in the country for twenty years. Bushnell contended that righteousness secures the only consequences worth having. It was this principle that carried the nation through the war and brought slavery to an end.

We have dwelt thus at length on the seminary

life of Bushnell because it shows how radically he broke away from the prevailing habit of thought, and also how early he outlined the chief features of his later studies. He quickly discovered and adopted as a ruling idea the fact that moral action cannot be determined by a hard and fast logic. He also discovered for himself—and it was his first discovery—the truth of Melancthon and Schleiermacher, that “the heart makes the theologian.” It was from such a world as this, where he had heard so much he did not believe and so little he did, that he entered the ministry. He had the advantages of a thorough education in college and two professional schools; a year of very close contact with the world as an editor in New York; an illuminating experience as a teacher of young men, and above all the memory and unwrought influence of a home in which the Christian nurture was like that which he afterward described. To this should be added an intimate knowledge of Coleridge’s “Aids to Reflection.” It may almost be said that it is to this book we are indebted for Bushnell. He began to read it in college, but it seemed “foggy and unintelligible,” and was put aside for “a long time.” He took it up later with this result:—

“For a whole half year I was buried under his ‘Aids to Reflection,’ and trying vainly to look up through. I was quite sure that I saw a star glimmer, but I could not quite see the stars. My habit was only landscape before; but now I saw



enough to convince me of a whole other world somewhere overhead, a range of realities in higher tier, that I must climb after, and, if possible, apprehend."

This book stood by him to the end, and in old age he confessed greater indebtedness to it than to any other book save the Bible. We have only to quote one passage, taken almost at random, to show what a fountain of light was unsealed to him in this volume. It was an epoch-making book, but Bushnell was one of the first to turn its light upon the theology of New England.<sup>1</sup>

"Too soon did the Doctors of the Church forget that the heart, the moral nature, was the beginning and the end; and that truth, knowledge, and insight were comprehended in its expansion. This was the true and first apostasy, — when in council and synod the Divine Humanities of the Gospel gave way to speculative Systems, and Religion became a Science of Shadows under the name of Theology, or at best a bare Skeleton of Truth, without life or interest, alike inaccessible and unintelligible to the majority of Christians. For these, therefore, there remained only rites and ceremonies and spectacles, shows and semblances. Thus among the learned the Substance of things

<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to ascertain, were it possible, if the lines on the original title-page, 1825, struck fire on a nature that was all ready to be set aflame: —

"This makes, that whatsoever here befalls,  
You in the region of yourself remain,  
Neighb'ring on Heaven: and that no foreign land."

DANIEL.

hoped for passed off into Notions; and for the unlearned the Surfaces of things became Substance. The Christian world was for centuries divided into the Many that did not think at all, and the Few who did nothing but think, — both alike unreflecting, the one from defect of the act, the other from the absence of an object.”

## **CHAPTER IV**

**MINISTRY FROM 1833 TO 1845**

"It is the tendency of some theorists at present to put Jesus and his life into the background ; to imagine that we can have a religion which will continuously move the world of men without a human master, whose life not only kindles human emotion round human life, but also fills the aspirations of our soul with the belief that they have been accomplished by one of ourselves, in humanity. There are those who think that the vast conception of the Father is enough for life without the conception of a human life in which all that the Father conceived for man was realized on earth to claim our love. I do not believe it. Were it so, God himself would have thought so. But He did not. When man was educated by God to the point where he could see greater truths, God gave the world Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, that we might know what love was in humanity ; and might love Him for that love, from which neither death nor life shall part us. Thus all that men feel for divinity in God the Father was, in the religious life, doubled by all that men feel for humanity. Take Jesus, then, to your heart. Love of him is necessary for our religion, if it is to have a full power of redemption among men. It is needed to give our causes movement, our ideas personality, our life tenderness, our human soul its full expansion in love over all the children of God." — STORFORD A. BROOKE, *The Gospel of Joy*, p. 95.

## CHAPTER IV

### MINISTRY FROM 1833 TO 1845

It was in December, 1833, that Bushnell took possession of a house which had been built during the summer from his own plans. It is described as "a simple, square, two-story building, with small green yard, graced by a noble oak in the rear." In selecting the lot, he had provided for two things, — a garden, and an open view of the country ending in distant hills. Each was a necessity to him, — the manifold life of growing things, and a distant horizon. Thrifty habits and a practical talent that rose almost to genius so swelled his moderate stipend that it furnished the means for a life of comfort and refinement. From beginning to end he avoided debt, as in itself poor economy and bad morality; he would have resented the imputation of it more quickly than that of heresy. There was an ethical cleanness in the man in all things that played back and forth between his life and his thought, lending reality to each.

We have but scant records of the first four or five years of his ministry. His first published sermon was under the title, "The Crisis of the Church." The manuscript still exists, labeled

"firstborn child," intimating that others might follow. The occasion of the sermon was the mobbing of Garrison in the streets of Boston. Its chief thought was that Protestantism in religion produces republicanism in government; that the principal dangers to the country were "slavery, infidelity, Romanism, and the current of our political tendencies." He clearly saw the inflammable nature of slavery, and the probability that it might at "any hour explode the foundations of the Republic." The cast of the sermon is large, and, if mistaken in some respects, it measured with great accuracy the political dangers. It was not an easy subject on which to preach at that time. In many pulpits it was tabooed; churches were divided, and the intolerance of the parties toward each other was intense. Bushnell was quite ready for criticism, but he escaped it by a high flight among the principles of his subject. During this period he began to produce those sermons which are among the clearest signs of his greatness both as a preacher and a theologian. In the first year of his ministry he wrote a sermon on "Duty not Measured by our own Ability" that would have sustained his reputation twenty years later. The subject was a firebrand in the pulpits about him, and it is easy to imagine how the congregation anxiously settled themselves in their pews and waited to hear on which side of the general controversy the young pastor would put himself in his discussion of the "important principle, — that

men are often, and properly, put under obligation to do that for which they have, in themselves, no present ability." But neither side heard what it expected. Old School and New School were ignored, or gently set aside to make room for a discussion that had nothing to do with their differences except to supersede or rather to absorb them in a more comprehensive view of the subject. Nothing was said of natural ability, or moral ability, or gracious ability, except that "they raise a false issue which can never be settled." To thus dismiss a controversy which had raged since Edwards, and was now embodied in the neighboring divinity schools, would have been regarded as a jest if his treatment of it had not been so serious. Instead of sinking himself and his hearers in "the abysmal depths of theology," he carried them into the world of human life and Christian experience, where all was so much a matter of fact that there was small room for question. Arminius and Edwards, Taylor and Tyler, would have listened without dissent, — bating a phrase or two, — and for the time would have forgotten their differences; or possibly, as often happens with contestants when a greater truth is forced upon them, they might have said, "We always thought so." For, in truth, Bushnell thus early was "passing into the vein of comprehensiveness," of which he afterward spoke, — a phrase that defines better than any other the method and spirit of the man. His own words in a sermon preached on the

twentieth anniversary of his ordination describe the theological situation and his relation to it: —

“ I was just then passing into the vein of comprehensiveness, questioning whether all parties were not in reality standing for some one side or article of the truth ; prepared in that manner to be at once independent of your two parties and the more cordial to both, that I was beginning to hold, under a different resolution of the subjects, all that both parties were contending for. My position among you kept me always in living contact with the opposite poles to be comprehended, and assisted me, by an external pressure, in realizing more and more distinctly what I was faintly conceiving or trying to elaborate within ; till, finally, my question became a truth experimentally proved, and I rested in the conviction that the comprehensive method is, in general, a possible, and, so far, the only Christian method of adjusting theologic differences. . . .

“ Accordingly, the effect of my preaching never was to overthrow one school and set up the other ; neither was it to find a position of neutrality midway between them ; but, as far as theology is concerned, it was to comprehend, if possible, the truth contended for in both ; in which I had, of course, abundant practice in the subtleties of speculative language, but had the Scriptures always with me, bolting out their free, incautious oppositions, regardless of all subtleties.”

He was unlike most preachers who represent



transitions. He did not begin on the level of those about him, but started out with a habit of thought and a set of principles which separated him from his brethren even more than he knew. He could no more be classed with them than "Aids to Reflection" could be classed with Dwight's "Theology." There were no breaks in his ministry, as in the case of Newman and Channing and Robertson; his revolt came prior to his settlement, and was so thorough both on the destructive and constructive side that he began his career without need of any radical change either in theology or method. His first volume — "Sermons for the New Life" — covers a quarter of a century, but so far as style, thought, and doctrine go, it would be difficult to assign a date to any one of them. That on "Living to God in Small Things" was preached in the fifth year of his ministry, and it might have been preached in the last, for he produced none more mature and effective. That on "Every Man's Life a Plan of God" — an early sermon — made an impression as deep and wide as any preached in the country, with two or three exceptions. Not many years ago the New York "Tribune" spoke of this sermon as one of the three greatest ever preached, and named as the other two Canon Mozley's on the "Reversal of Human Judgments" and Bishop Phillips Brooks' "Gold and the Calf." Without containing a controversial word, it swept away the dismal thoughts engendered by a perverted

doctrine of decrees, and brought God down into the lives of men in such a way as to make them feel that instead of being the objects of sovereign election, they were co-workers with God in his eternal plans. It had all of Old School and New School that was of value, but without anything to justify either as they then existed.

It was in 1835 — only two years after his settlement — that he began that series of papers which involved him in question and suspicion. The first was an article in the "Christian Spectator" on "Revivals of Religion," which was incorporated eleven years later into "Christian Nurture," — a book which had its genesis and its *raison d'être* in this essay. Fuller mention of it will be made in the next chapter. In 1837 he began to be taught in the school of domestic sorrow. An infant daughter died, and the severe illness of an older child kept him long in the region of suffering and death. These experiences, and heavier ones that came later, took full possession of him, but they bore fruit in his thought, and formed the material out of which he constructed what might seem to be the mere product of speculation. All his greater contentions had for their basis some personal experience.

In the spring of 1839 a trouble of the throat, already felt, began to show itself more decidedly, and from that time on his life was overshadowed by disease. It was, however, long before he could be called an invalid, and still longer before he

relaxed in his work, but the fatal mark was on him. He spent July in Saratoga, and with benefit, if we may judge by his work in September. He had been engaged to deliver an address in Andover, but a mistake of a week in the date so shortened his time for preparation that he had but one day for it. He wrote through one day, took the stage at sundown, rode all night to Worcester, and the next day to Andover, and gave his address in the afternoon. It was not only an achievement in physical vigor, but a turning-point in his career as a theologian. The hastily prepared address had been a subject of thought since college days, and contained the germ which was afterward fully developed in his theory of language. In discussing the use of figures and methods of interpretation and their application to Biblical statements bearing on the Trinity, he entered the world of suspicion and accusation from which he never wholly emerged. He knew that he was taking the first step, and that others must follow. It induced a state of mind which, coupled with impaired health, is best indicated by a letter to his wife written a few days later : —

“I cannot but feel a degree of anxiety about myself in regard to my future health, which is constantly acting on my love to my family. This disease hangs about me, and I am afraid is getting a deeper hold of me. Not that I seem to have been specially injured by my late task in the Andover matter, for I was borne through it quite

above my expectations ; but the mischief clings to me, and will not let me go. In the hasty scratch I sent you in the turmoil of the anniversary, I told you generally how I succeeded. . . . I said some things very cautiously in regard to the Trinity which, perhaps, will make a little breeze. If so, I shall not feel much upset. I have been thinking lately that I *must* write and publish the whole truth on these subjects as God has permitted me to see it. I have withheld till my views are well matured ; and to withhold longer, I fear, is a want of that moral courage which animated Luther and every other man who has been a true soldier of Christ. Then, thinking of such men lately, I have often had self-reproaches which were very unpleasant. Has my dear wife any of Luther's spirit? Will she enter into the hazards and reproaches, and perhaps privations, which lie in this encounter for the truth? Strange, you will say, that I should be talking, in the same letter, of doing more for my family and of endangering all their worldly comforts. But I am under just these contending impulses. However, in what way shall I do more for my family than to connect their history with the truth of Christ? How more, for example, for our dear boy than to give him the name and example of a father who left him his fortunes, rough and hard as they were, in the field of truth? But will not God take care of us? These are thoughts which have been urging me for the last few months, or since the shock that

has befallen my health. And I have sometimes felt afraid that I should be obliged to leave the world before my work was done. Shall we go forward?"

The criticism that began to be heard outside showed itself at last in his parish, though it never reached the point of accusation. A letter which time has spared reveals a feature of the churches on their theological side which still survives, though in lessening degree. It was an arraignment by a parishioner of his pastor for his position on profound questions of theology, such as regeneration and original sin, which he debated as a professional, and with the emphasis of having held his own views for thirty years. It did not occur to him, nor apparently to any one else at that time, to inquire if the views of his pastor might not be true; his only concern was lest he had departed from the accepted standards of belief. Such a state of mind, whenever it prevails, shows a decadence of faith and a readiness to stone the prophets. Bushnell answered the letter in a patient spirit, and with explanation except on the point of total depravity, a question on which he would not prematurely cast away the pearls he had been gathering. The arraignment came to no issue in the church. Meanwhile he went on his way not much troubled and wholly unmoved by criticism, from whatever source it came, bearing witness to the truth as he saw it.

In 1840 he preached a notable sermon on "American Politics," in which he protested against

giving the suffrage to women on the ground that it would destroy the peace and unity of domestic life, — “the grand sacrament of creation.” In the discussion of this subject, as of all others, he struck straight for the natural principle underlying it, and found it in the family. He spoke also of the spoils system in a way that classes him with the civil service reformers of to-day.

In the same year he was asked to become the president of Middlebury College, in Vermont. The Coleridgian atmosphere of the institution was congenial to him, but after a journey thither and mature deliberation, he declined the invitation. The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him about this time by Wesleyan University. He cared little for the honor, but accepted it rather than seem to reject the courtesy of a young and neighboring college. He afterward received the same degree from Harvard, and that of Doctor of Laws from Yale. The years from this time to 1845 were crowded with various forms of work. He seemed to celebrate the full development of his powers by reaching out in all directions for commensurate fields. His biographer says that “there were years all through his life when a high tide seemed to set into every mental inlet.” It could at no time be said of him that he neglected his parish, but his conception of it was not territorial. If he preached politics, his sermons became ethical treatises on the nature and function of government. He held to the Puritan conception of the State as

moral, and did not hesitate to use his pulpit to enforce this conception, and to denounce any departure from it. The anti-slavery movement was so distinctly Christian that Bushnell would not keep it out of his pulpit, even if his sermons were regarded and used as campaign documents, as happened with a Fast Day discourse preached in 1844, during the presidential campaign when Henry Clay was the candidate. Bushnell denounced the Missouri Compromise, of which Clay was the author, as "bringing moral desolation on the fairest portion of the globe." When criticised, he claimed that he was not assailing Mr. Clay as a candidate, but as the leader in "a national sin." In 1842 we find him going about on lecturing tours, though he was rather too serious and weighty a speaker to win popular applause. In August he delivered a Commencement address at Hudson, Ohio, before Western Reserve College, the Yale of the West, on the "Stability of Change." In this year a great sorrow befell him in the death of his only son, a child of four years and of great promise. His disappointment and grief were keen, but the event drove him farther into the world of the spirit, and served to fit him for receiving those deeper revelations of Christian life which are seen in his later work. It also gave reality to his thoughts of the heavenly world. "Have not I a harper there?" he said in an evening sermon soon after his loss.

In 1843 he became interested in the Protestant

League, which later was merged in the Christian Alliance, a movement antagonistic to the Church of Rome. During the next three years he devoted much time and strength to this object, wasting his forces on questions which time and Providence are settling in ways far different from those he contemplated. But his interest was a Puritan inheritance, and the questions were such as easily enlisted one whose religion and patriotism were almost interchangeable terms. Perhaps nothing that came from his pen is to be more lightly passed over than his letter to the Pope, written while in London in 1846. Fortunately for Bushnell and his future career, the Christian Alliance merged itself in the Evangelical Alliance, which, in lowering its name, logically dropped into a doctrinal narrowness that led him to give it up. When the new society began its campaign for church unity on the basis of an exclusive doctrinal creed, he withdrew, leaving behind him a protest full of wise words, equally appropriate to later proposals for union on ecclesiastical terms proceeding from one party.

“Unity in itself, especially unity conditioned upon a common catechism, is not an object. Neither is it a thing to be compassed by any direct effort. It is an incident, not a principle, or a good by itself. It has its value in the valuable activities it unites, and the conjoining of beneficent powers. The more we seek it, the less we have it. Besides, most of what we call division in the Church of God is only distribution. The distribution of the



church, like that of human society, is one of the great problems of divine wisdom; and the more we study it, observing how the personal tastes, wants, and capacities of men in all ages and climes are provided for, and how the parts are made to act as stimulants to each other, the less disposed shall we be to think that the work of distribution is done badly. It is not the same thing with Christian unity, either to be huddled into a small inclosure, or to show the world how small a plat of ground we can all stand on. Unity is a grace broad as the universe, embracing in its ample bosom all right minds that live, and outreaching the narrow contents of all words and dogmas.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1843 Bushnell gave an address before the Alumni of Yale College on “The Growth of Law,” to which reference will be made farther on. It is named here in order to call attention to the criticism which increasingly followed him whenever he spoke. An anonymous pamphlet by “Catholicus” discovered in the address “Rationalistic, Socinian, and infidel tendencies.” Such attacks were not lost, and served as fuel for the fires soon to be kindled. “The Puritan” (Orthodox) indorsed the pamphlet, and “The Christian Register” (Unitarian) stretched out its hand for possible fellowship. In the same year he attended the Bunker Hill celebration, walking arm in arm with George Ripley of Brook Farm, and heard Webster, whom he always admired, deliver one of his famous orations. More

<sup>1</sup> *New Englander*, January, 1847.

important was an evening spent with Rev. Theodore Parker, when they "went over the whole ground of theology together." It is safe to say that neither appealed to the "standards." Five publications, the care of his pulpit, and the excitement of a presidential campaign rendered the year 1844 a hard one, and paved the way for a thorough breakdown in health the following year. His more than ordinary strength yielded under great and exhausting labors, and in February he was prostrated by a fever which left him with weakened lungs. His salary was increased by his sympathetic parish, and in April he went to North Carolina, where rest and the "warmer sun and sweeter climate" restored him in a measure, but not sufficiently for his duties. A year in Europe was determined on, and he sailed by the ship *Victoria* in July, 1845.

**CHAPTER V**  
**CHRISTIAN NURTURE**

"It is significant of every great new birth in the world that it turns its face toward childhood, and looks into that image for the profoundest realization of its hopes and dreams. In the attitude of men toward childhood we may discover the near or far realization of that supreme hope and confidence with which the great head of the human family saw, in the vision of a child, the new heaven and the new earth. It was when his disciples were reasoning among themselves which of them should be the greatest, that Jesus took a child, and set him by him, and said unto them, 'Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me.' The reception of the Christ by men, from that day to this, has been marked by successive throes of humanity, and in each great movement there has been a new apprehension of childhood, a new recognition of the meaning involved in the pregnant words of the Saviour." — HORACE E. SCUDDER, *Childhood in Literature and Art*, p. 102.

"The theological substratum of Puritan morality denied to childhood any freedom, and kept the life of man in waiting upon the conscious turning of the soul to God. Hence childhood was a time of probation and suspense. It was wrong, to begin with, and was repressed in its nature until maturity should bring an active and conscious allegiance to God. Hence, also, parental anxiety was forever earnestly seeking to anticipate the maturity of age, and to secure for childhood that reasonable intellectual belief which it held to be essential to salvation; there followed often a replacement of free childhood by an abnormal development. In any event, the tendency of the system was to ignore childhood, to get rid of it as quickly as possible, and to make the State contain only self-conscious, determined citizens of the kingdom of heaven. There was, unwittingly, a reversal of the divine message, and it was said in effect to children, Except ye become as grown men and be converted, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." — *Ibid.*, p. 128.

## CHAPTER V

### CHRISTIAN NURTURE

WE pass over the journey to Europe and other incidents of Bushnell's life in order to speak consecutively of the theological treatises which came one after another from his busy pen. The most important of all, "Christian Nurture," was published in 1846. It had been, however, ten years in preparation, having had its genesis in an article on "Revivals of Religion," published in 1836 in the "Christian Spectator." Its specific aim was to establish the proposition, "That the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise." A very simple statement, but it shook New England theology to its foundations. The phrase, by its very form, challenged the extreme individualism into which the churches had lapsed, and recalled them to those organic relations between parents and children which are recognized in the historic churches, and which also had been recognized to a certain extent by the churches of New England before Edwards. As has happened before in theological controversy, the heresy with which Bushnell was charged in connection with this subject was in fact a return to an older orthodoxy. It is also a fact that those who were

loudest in making the charge regarded themselves as upholders of this older orthodoxy. They identified Bushnell with the "New Light" party, but his book in the main fell within the lines of the older school to which the critics supposed that they belonged.

The critics were deceived by the modern tone in which Bushnell discussed the ancient thesis, and by the free use made of nature and social laws and relations. In this respect they were justified in their criticism. Bushnell was working in a world of which they had little knowledge and great suspicion. The fact that his thesis coincided with an older orthodoxy was a matter of chance ; in reality it sprang out of the heart of nature. Christian experience had become non-natural. Bushnell, without excluding the agency of divine grace, brought it within the play of the natural relations of the family. It was here that he always took his first look at any subject, — the nature of the matter in hand, — not waiting to ask what is the accepted view. It is this first-hand investigation that lends to all his work the charm of nature itself. It is also at times an occasion of suspicion, for the direct study of nature is the most difficult work men ever undertake. Nature is so full of light that it dazzles and of shadows that it hides ; it is so near that its proportions cannot easily be measured ; it is elusive and runs quickly into mystery ; it is so one with us that to see it is like the eye trying to see itself ; its processes are long

and its phases are many ; it is the part of an immeasurable whole. Bushnell did not always escape these snares, yet few writers have looked on nature with a more single eye and more careful reflection.

It is not wholly unfortunate that in the study of Christian nurture he came to it without a thorough knowledge of its place in the history of the church. Whatever technical knowledge of it he had was pushed aside by his own necessary mental habit, and by the circumstances in which he found himself as a pastor. He was confronted by a situation, and at first did not trouble himself about the past. Hence, it was with half surprise that he found himself unfolding a more ancient orthodoxy. The fact became convenient as a defense against criticism, but it had slight weight in the elaboration of his thesis. The book was a criticism of revivalism, and incidentally of the prevalent theology which gave rise to it. Bushnell seldom attacked this theology as a whole, but only in detail and as it came in his way. He wrote as a pastor in conflict with a system which hindered him in his work. He could not correlate the teaching of his pulpit with the prevailing method of propagating the life of the church. The "improvements" in theology had subordinated the "older orthodoxy" of the subject to a view of the will which led to those special features of revivals that Bushnell most disliked. The will had not only been declared free, but was made to cover

nearly the whole matter of becoming a Christian.<sup>1</sup>

The revival was an active epitome of the newer doctrine of the will. The emphasis laid upon it and the intense individualism it developed, while it favored strength of character, tended to obscure that field where character has its roots and is mainly determined; namely, the child. The people of New England have never been wanting in logic. It was this mental honesty in conforming the revival to the theology that at last weakened each, but the revival was the first to lose ground.

The question may arise why "the more ancient orthodoxy" with which Bushnell found himself in partial accord did not conflict with the practical treatment of children in the same way as did the orthodoxy of his own day. The Puritan movement, in its early days, was chiefly a protest against corruptions. The place of children in the historic church was not in itself an offense in the eye of the Puritan, and it was protected by a doctrine of the covenants which brought the Abrahamic and Jewish institutions that pertained to

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Stowe, who ought to be classed as both an apologist and a critic of the New England theology, for few have understood and none have described it so well, in *Oldtown Folks* (vol. ii. p. 48, and many succeeding pages) has put this point in its best light: "The keynote of Mr. Avery's mind was 'the free agency of man.' Free agency was with him the universal solvent, the philosopher's stone in theology; every line in his sermons said to every human being, 'You are free, and you are able.' And the great object was to intensify to its highest point, in every human being, the sense of individual, personal responsibility."



them over into the Christian Church, — a relation that was sustained by ineradicable common sense. The covenants may have been made in Holland, as Professor Park said, but the covenant that embraces Abraham and his seed was true before the dikes of Holland were built. Baptism made the child a member of the church, and Christian training was expected to fulfill and perfect the relation so far as it could under the limitations of the theology.<sup>1</sup>

These were stringent and perplexing enough ;

<sup>1</sup> The relation of baptized children to the church has never been clearly defined by the Congregational churches of New England. The system, as embracing a theology and an ecclesiastical order, is at war with itself. The Cambridge Platform in 1648, under the still fresh reaction from the state church, allowed none to be members of the Church but such as gave evidence of spiritually renewed character. But as baptism was a requisite to citizenship in most of the colonies, it was found that the State was limiting its citizens beyond the bounds of safety. Hence the Synod of 1662 created the *Half-way Covenant*, which provided for the baptism of the children of those who held only a speculative faith ; it was purely a measure of State. This device induced a reaction and a debate which may be traced throughout the pages of Cotton Mather's *Magnalia*. It reveals the fact that children were regarded as sustaining some organic relation to the church by virtue of baptism. Anabaptism also had begun to cast its shadow on the churches, inducing the necessity of making a contrast with it as to the relation of children to the church. The confusion of the subject was plainly recognized by Hopkins, who took what might be called a high church view of baptism, as Buehnell shows in his *Argument for Christian Nurture*, pp. 70, 71, a book now out of print. But the confusion lingers still, and will linger until the theory of the nature and growth of the church taught by this treatise is accepted. It is needless to say that it will be a return to the historic view and practice.

but as in the Ptolemaic astronomy an epicycle was added whenever a difficulty was encountered, so provisions were created out of the assumed purposes of God for relieving children from the full stress of absolute and unconditional election. Moreover, magical conceptions of the ordinance lingered long and overbore logic. Consistent Calvinism allows no place in the church for children. Whether it be old or new, it breaks down over them, as Dr. Prentiss showed long ago.<sup>1</sup> It cannot dispose of them in such a way as to preserve its consistency and command the assent of the human heart. As the heart makes the theologian, so it makes and unmakes theologies. Any system must at last go under that gives color even to an inference of the non-election of infants. If it endeavors to escape its inhumanity, it sinks under the weakness of its subterfuges. The later theology, by the very force of its logic, could not allow children to lie in the bosom of its church, as in the historical churches. Its inwrought individualism and the freedom which more and more it put into the will were carried into the domain of childhood. The revivalism known as the "Great Awakening" invaded the precincts of the church where the young reposed in the security of baptism and the parental pledge, and brought them forward as candidates for its process. In attacking revivalism, Bushnell stormed the weakest point of the theological citadel. It should not be

<sup>1</sup> See page prefatory to next chapter.

forgotten, however, that the moderate Calvinism, especially as taught at New Haven, in which the full freedom of the will was brought to the front and made the chief factor in the first experiences of the Christian life, was the source of great religious activity and usefulness. Upon the whole it was an advance, and almost a reform. But the emphasis it laid upon the will, taken in connection with other parts of the system, necessarily favored the revival, and, incidentally, its excesses.

The ground of Bushnell's contention lay first in the system itself, then in the form it had assumed, and lastly in the methods to which it gave rise. More than he himself was aware of, he departed from the Calvinistic standards, and pursued his way in a region where the heart and common sense prescribed both path and bounds. The fact which he first encountered in his survey of the current revival was that the experience of conversion presupposed adult years; and even the adult was called to pass through waters too deep for him. He must begin, not with a sense of personal sin, but of a lost condition through original sin in Adam; he must feel a guilt not first his own, but of the race; he is not a sinful child of the Father, but a child of wrath lying under the righteous condemnation of God; he is totally depraved, and already doomed to everlasting punishment. The whole matter was complicated by a doctrine of sovereign decrees, election and reprobation, ability or inability to repent, — often a ter-

ritorial distinction, held here and denied there; the inefficacy, or, as Hopkins and Emmons declared, the wickedness of prayer by the unregenerate; different kinds of grace and of love; the use or uselessness of means, and the order of the human and the divine activity in the process of conversion. Child and adult alike were, in one way or another, involved in this network of doctrine. Much of it was necessarily waived in the actual revival; some regard was paid to the personal equation; common sense could not be wholly expelled from people who were full of it. But seldom has an ideal been more fully carried out, and never was a pulpit truer to itself. The result was that the people were saturated with the doctrines as they happened to be held at the time and in the region.

Under such conceptions of religion the child had little place. Nature was fairly driven off from the field of its life, and it was made the battle-ground where ponderous doctrines marched up and down, trampling under foot its native growths, and using its eternal destiny as a factor in working out the glory of God. The child filled a passive part in the system; the adult was both passive and active. His experience was expected to tally with the system and run the round of its several members in a fixed order. First came the question of the possibility of non-election, by which all efforts were left to turn on chance. Then came the question of ability under a doctrine of total depravity, start-

ing the puzzle of, "You can and you can't;" then the horrible question of the possibility of having grieved away the Holy Spirit, for two centuries the nightmare of the piety of New England; then the beclouded subtleties of the relation of the atonement to personal character, — all chiefly forensic. Still the experience was sharply individual. Each soul was isolated from every other, and almost from God, and left to wrestle alone for salvation.

The chief feature of this phase of religious experience was its unnaturalness. Great truths were involved in the system, and great results sprang out of them, but they were so defined and used that they almost lost the features of a gospel and wore the cast of a doom. It dealt with human nature only as depraved, and hence took little account of its varying characteristics or special needs, but loaded it with burdens that did not belong to it, and then required it to throw them off by processes that were drawn out of metaphysical subtleties buttressed by random quotations from Scripture.

Bushnell writes of it as follows: —

"It is a religion that begins explosively, raises high frames, carries little or no expansion, and, after the campaign is over, subsides into a torpor. Considered as a distinct era, introduced by Edwards, and extended and caricatured by his contemporaries, it has one great merit, and one great defect. The merit is that it displaced an era of dead formality, and brought in the demand of

a truly supernatural experience. The defect is that it has cast a type of religious individualism, intense beyond any former example. It makes nothing of the family, and the church, and the organic powers God has constituted as vehicles of grace. It takes every man as if he had existed *alone*; presumes that he is unreconciled to God until he has undergone some sudden and explosive experience in adult years, or after the age of reason; demands that experience, and only when it is reached, allows the subject to be an heir of life. Then, on the other side, or that of the Spirit of God, the very act or *ictus* by which the change is wrought is isolated or individualized, so as to stand in no connection with any other of God's means or causes,—an epiphany, in which God leaps from the stars, or some place above, to do a work apart from all system, or connection with his other works. Religion is thus a kind of transcendental matter, which belongs on the outside of life, and has no part in the laws by which life is organized,—a miraculous epidemic, a fireball shot from the moon, something holy, because it is from God, but so extraordinary, so out of place, that it cannot suffer any vital connection with the ties, and causes, and forms, and habits, which constitute the frame of our history. Hence the desultory, hard, violent, and often extravagant or erratic character it manifests. Hence, in part, the dreary years of decay and darkness that interspace our months of excitement and victory." (Christian Nurture, p. 187.)

The full purpose of the treatise was to discuss the divine constitution of the family as the means of securing Christian character. It maintained that the unit of the church as well as of society is the family, and that in both it is organic ; that character can be transmitted, and thus Christianity can be organized into the race and the trend of nature be made to set in that direction. The presumption should be that children may be trained into piety, and that it is not necessary that conversion should be awaited and secured under a system of revivalism that is without order as to time and cause.

The book consists of two parts, — “The Doctrine” and “The Mode.” The first defines the nature of Christian nurture ; the second refers to practical methods of securing it. He introduces his thesis and debates it as follows : —

“That the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise.

“In other words, the aim, effort, and expectation should be, not, as is commonly assumed, that the child is to grow up in sin, to be converted after he comes to a mature age ; but that he is to open on the world as one that is spiritually renewed, not remembering the time when he went through a technical experience, but seeming rather to have loved what is good from his earliest years ” (p. 10).

After asserting the possibility of “seeds of holy principle” and its signs in children, and of possible fault and mistake in parents, he says : —

“ You must not assume that we, in this age, are the best Christians that have ever lived, or most likely to produce all the fruits of piety. . . . We have some good points, in which we compare favorably with other Christians, and Christians of other times, but our style of piety is sadly deficient, in many respects, and that to such a degree that we have little cause for self-congratulation. With all our activity and boldness of movement, there is a certain hardness and rudeness, a want of sensibility to things that do not lie in action, which cannot be too much deplored, or too soon rectified. We hold a piety of conquest rather than of love, — a kind of public piety, that is strenuous and fiery on great occasions, but wants the beauty of holiness, wants constancy, singleness of aim, loveliness, purity, richness, blamelessness, and — if I may add another term not so immediately religious, but one that carries, by association, a thousand religious qualities — wants domesticity of character ; wants them, I mean, not as compared with the perfect standard of Christ, but as compared with other examples of piety that have been given in former times, and others that are given now.

“ For some reason, we do not make a Christian atmosphere about us, — do not produce the conviction that we are living unto God ” (pp. 11–14).

“ This is the very idea of Christian education, that it begins with nurture or cultivation. And the intention is that the Christian life and spirit of the parents, which are in and by the Spirit of God,



shall flow into the mind of the child, to blend with his incipient and half-formed exercises ; that they shall thus beget their own good within him, — their thoughts, opinions, faith, and love, which are to become a little more, and yet a little more, his own separate exercise, but still the same in character. The contrary assumption, that virtue must be the product of separate and absolutely independent choice, is pure assumption. As regards the measure of personal merit and demerit, it is doubtless true that every subject of God is to be responsible only for what is his own. But virtue still is rather a *state* of being than an act or series of acts ; and if we look at the causes which induce or prepare such a state, the will of the person himself may have a part among these causes more or less important, and it works no absurdity to suppose that one may be even prepared to such a state, by causes prior to his own will ; so that, when he sets off to act for himself, his struggle and duty may be rather to sustain and perfect the state begun, than to produce a new one. Certain it is that we are never, at any age, so independent as to be wholly out of the reach of organic laws which affect our character.

“ All society is organic, — the church, the state, the school, the family ; and there is a spirit in each of these organisms, peculiar to itself, and more or less hostile, more or less favorable to religious character, and to some extent, at least, sovereign over the individual man. . . . The child is only

more within the power of organic laws than we all are. We possess only a mixed individuality all our life long. A pure, separate, individual man, living *wholly* within, and from himself, is a mere fiction. I need not say that this view of an organic connection of character subsisting between parent and child lays a basis for notions of Christian education, far different from those which now prevail, under the cover of a merely fictitious and mischievous individualism " (p. 30).

"Something has undoubtedly been gained to modern theology, as a human science, by fixing the attention strongly upon the individual man, as a moral agent, immediately related to God, and responsible only for his own actions; at the same time there was a truth, an important truth, underlying the old doctrine of federal headship and original or imputed sin, though strangely misconceived, which we seem, in our one-sided speculations, to have quite lost sight of. And how can we ever attain to any right conception of organic duties, until we discover the reality of organic powers and relations? And how can we hope to set ourselves in harmony with the Scriptures, in regard to family nurture, or household baptism, or any other kindred subject, while our theories exclude, or overlook, precisely that which is the base of their teachings and appointments?" (p. 39).

His criticism of revivals, though close and searching, still has charity and breadth, for which we must refer the reader to pages 59 and onward.

In chapter third, under a significant title, — “The Ostrich Nurture,” — the prevailing methods of religious education are discussed, and especially the claim that children should be left to grow up in a spontaneous way, and to “generate their own principles.” He also criticises an over-use of “free moral agency, by which the distinction between manhood and childhood is slurred over,” and parents are led to say, “Must not our children answer for themselves?” He protests also against “notions of conversion that are mechanical,” and against drilling children “into all the constraints, separated from all the hopes and liberties of religion,” thus making “their nurture a nurture of despair,” and a source of “fixed aversion to religion.” He again protests against bringing up children in expectation of revival seasons, and on the other hand against “a mere ethical nurture” that neglects the God-ward side. This strenuous chapter closes with a tender vindication of the claim that as Christ is the Saviour of children, they have an inherent right to a place in his church, which is to give character to their nurture.

In the fourth chapter — perhaps the weightiest — the “organic unity” of the family is discussed. He repudiates again the excessive individualism of the day: —

“The state, the church, the family, have ceased to be regarded as such, according to their proper idea, and become mere collections of units. A national life, a church life, a family life, is no

longer conceived, or perhaps conceivable, by many. Instead of being wrought in together and penetrated, to some extent, by historic laws and forces common to all the members, we only seem to lie as seeds piled together, without any terms of connection, save the accident of proximity, or the fact that we all belong to the heap. And thus the three great forms of organic existence, which God has appointed for the race, are in fact lost out of mental recognition" (p. 91).

He claims for the family a power that is more than influence, springing from "organic causes," which act unconsciously prior "to the age of rational choice," yet formatively on character. He defends his position by a series of arguments which now need no defense, but deserve attention on account of their practical value. In these pages he anticipates much that is being said on heredity as an element in evolution, and on sub-consciousness as treated by the new psychology. The questions of original sin and federal headship are inevitably involved, and are accepted as containing truths, but rather on natural than on theological grounds.<sup>1</sup>

But he puts these doctrines that spring out of

<sup>1</sup> In the numerous criticisms which followed this treatise, none is abler and more generous than that of Professor C. Hodge, in the *Princeton Review*, 1847. He agrees, with but slight dissent, in Bushnell's treatment of the organic nature of the church and the practical inferences drawn from it, but disagrees with his views of conversion as leaning towards mere naturalism. They were both farther apart and nearer than either knew; the next half century might have brought them to see eye to eye.

“organic unity” to a new use, making them tributary to grace as well as to evil.

“That an engine of so great power should be passed by, when every other law and object in the universe is appropriated and wielded as an instrument of grace, and that in a movement for the redemption of the race, is inconceivable. The conclusion thus reached does not carry us, indeed, to the certain inference that the organic unity of the family will avail to set forth every child of Christian parents in a Christian life. But if we consider the tremendous power it has, as an instrument of evil, how far short of such an opinion does it leave us, when computing the reach of its power as an instrument of grace?” (p. 111).

After taking pains to avoid what he deems the superstition of baptismal regeneration, he finds the reason for the ceremony in the “organic unity” of the parents with the child, who “is taken to be regenerate, presumptively on the ground of his known connection with the parents’ character, and the divine or church life, which is the life of that character.” This undoubtedly is the interpretation that reason and charity require us to put on the rite as it exists in the historical churches. Bushnell cherished an invincible dislike to the Church of Rome, and it is a sign of his mental honesty that he could come so near to one of its central features without stronger aversion.

In the last chapter of the first part he brings his plea for Christian nurture to a conclusion by

striving to show that the church is to possess the world through "the out-populating power of the Christian stock." The chapter is a characteristic mingling of spirituality and naturalism, each running into the other even as they coexisted in his thought. Wherever else he looked, he always had an eye open to nature. His argument is keen, comprehensive, and well buttressed by Scripture, but there is an excess of *a priori* speculation, and a somewhat too easy dealing with questions about which little was known at that time and hardly more at present. But within certain limits his contention has weight, and there is no doubt that it has enough of unquestioned truth to render it of immense importance, both speculatively and practically. It is along such lines that thought now runs.

In the second part, which pertains to mode of Christian nurture, the treatise loses its theological and disputative character, and wears a psychological cast. But these characteristics sink out of sight under its overwhelming practicalness. With some slight editing, it might again be made a handbook on Christian training. When first published, it was needed to correct false methods of Christian nurture; to-day, it is needed to supply a lack, and to stimulate thought in right directions. The first chapter of part second discusses the question, "When and where, at what point, and how early, does the office of a genuine nurture begin?" Little could be added to-day to the force of his

discussion except stronger emphasis. Starting with "a kind of ante-natal nurture," he asserts that "the nurture of the soul and character is to begin just where the nurture of the body begins," and then makes the distinction, now so prominent in pedagogic studies, between "the age of impressions and the age of tuitional influences." He sharpens the distinction by connecting the former with "the will of the parent," and so proposes the way for a full examination of the reach and power of "early impressions;" and concludes by saying that "more is done, or lost by neglect of doing, on a child's immortality in the first three years of his life than in all his years of discipline afterward." The remaining chapters refer to "Parental Qualifications," "Family Government," "Holidays and Sundays," "Family Prayers," and kindred topics, with a mingled breadth, subtilty, strenuousness, common sense, and spirituality that put it at the head of all treatises of the kind. Now and then it may be slightly out of date in respect to scientific accuracy, but even here it is oftener prophetic than incorrect. The heavy belaboring of the revival system is no longer much needed, but the main body of the book is one of the richest treasures in religious pedagogics which this century can offer to the next. Whatever theology prevails in the future, this treatise represents a standing need of humanity, and its lessons are so grounded in eternal principles and unalterable facts that they will always be timely, while its

form should make it a classic. In its theological significance it is a rejection of an individualistic theory of the church, and, incidentally, of its method of growth, and a return to the corporate theory of growth by nurture.

We cannot better close this chapter than by quoting from a letter written to one of his children, as showing how his thought and the yearning love of his heart sustained each other. His treatise carried in it the life of his life: —

“You have been religiously educated, and you are come now to an age when you must begin to be more responsible to yourself. Our prayer for you is, every day, that God would impart his grace to you and draw you on to a full choice of himself, and perform the good work which we trust He has begun in you. This would complete our happiness in you. I would recommend to you now that you set before you, as a distinct object, the preparing yourself to make a profession of the Saviour. Make this a distinct object of thought and of prayer every day. And do not inquire so much what you are, whether truly a Christian in heart or not, as how you may come into the full Christian spirit, to become unselfish, to have a distinct and abiding love to Christ. Unite yourself to Christ for life, and try to receive his beautiful and loving spirit. You will find much darkness in you, but Christ will give you light. Your sins will trouble you, but Christ will take away your sins and give you peace. Pray God, also, to give



you his spirit, and do not doubt that his spirit will help you through all difficulties. In all your duties and studies, endeavor to do them for God, and so as to please Him. Make this, too, your pleasure, for assuredly it will be the highest pleasure. It may not so appear at first, but it will be so very soon. Nothing, you will see in a moment, can yield so sweet a pleasure as the love and pursuit of excellence, especially that excellence which consists in a good and right heart before God. And you will be more likely to love this work and have success in it, if you set before you some fixed object, such as I have proposed.

“We gave you to God in your childhood, and now it belongs to you to thank God for the good we have sought to do for you, and try to fulfill our kindness by assuming for yourself what we promised for you.”



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **RECEPTION OF CHRISTIAN NURTURE**

“I do not see how we can rest content with any conception of the system of Providence which does not take in the case of young children. . . . And yet one searches in vain through many an elaborate treatise on both the temporal and spiritual government of God for a single chapter — yea, a single page — in elucidation of this momentous subject. The children, that is, an immense majority of the human race, are virtually left out of account, as if they were not included in the divine plan. . . . Many of the theologians seem to be strangely unconscious that, if really immortal, the problem of their spiritual being, here and hereafter, must needs involve fundamental principles of the divine system. A theodicy that shall meet the claims of Christian thought, and satisfy the cravings of the Christian heart, or charm to silence its doubts and fears, must vindicate the ways of Providence toward little children as well as toward the full-grown men and women.” — PROFESSOR GEORGE L. PRENTISS, D. D., “Infant Salvation and its Theological Bearings,” *Presbyterian Review*, July, 1883.

## CHAPTER VI

### RECEPTION OF CHRISTIAN NURTURE

It is not strange that "Christian Nurture" met with a stout resistance. In its inmost meaning it supplanted a theory of church life which had been slowly elaborated by a process evidently one of improvement and attended with good results. Not to have resisted would have been a surrender of a self-witnessing spiritual life. The later New England theology, especially as elaborated by the New Haven divines, represented not merely a speculative system, but a moral force of unimpeachable value. It stood for most of the good that the churches were doing at the time. Bushnell had no thought of displacing it as a whole, and even found a qualified place for revivalism. Nevertheless, his contention went beyond all such qualifications, and called for a method of church growth and a theology quite unlike that about him. He virtually recurred to the historic churches, and broke with a provincial system which, in aiming to secure certain invaluable truths, had suffered them to grow into proportions so wide as to exclude even greater truths.

From their own standpoint his critics were right, and he had no justification but such as was to be

drawn from profounder views both of doctrine and method. But from another point of view, it is strange that a book so bathed in household love, a very cradle-song of Christian faith, should have become the occasion of a theological controversy of the proverbial bitterness. It is the redeeming feature of such controversies that time soon extracts their sting, and frowns are exchanged for smiles. Some greater truth or wider generalization comes into the field, and the debate dies out. For a while dignity suffers some discomposure, but it is a merciful arrangement of Providence that in dialectic controversy numerous ways of escape are left open by which the defeated party can retreat with self-respect and even with a show of victory. Few people in New England would now hesitate to say that it is wise to train children into the Christian life very much as Bushnell suggests ; and the greater part would wonder where the theological difficulties came in.

The immediate occasion of the book was an article in the "New Englander" which provoked some dissent in the Ministerial Association of which Bushnell was a member, and he was invited to prepare a paper on the subject of Christian training. He brought before it two sermons, which not only provoked no dissent, but led to a request for publication. The manuscript was offered anonymously to the Massachusetts Sunday School Society, and was examined by the committee on publication, who individually approved, but hesi-

tated over printing it, lest the novelty of its views might stir up controversy. After some revision and a delay of six months, it was published, and seemed about to awaken interest without alarm until a letter, having the sanction of the North Association of Hartford County, appeared, charging that the discourses were full of "dangerous tendencies." This charge without doubt originated in the Theological Institute of Connecticut, an institution that had been organized in 1834, with the distinct purpose of controverting the doctrinal teaching of the Divinity School in New Haven. Its founding reveals the intensity of feeling over the differences in opinion, and scarcely more; the differences themselves were so slight that they hardly admitted of definition. This conflict that raged for twenty or more years between these schools was a repetition of what has always been going on, — bitter debate in one age over questions that die out in the next. The universality of the process seems to indicate a law that should temper our judgment of it; it is, perhaps, the price paid for exact thought.

Bushnell from the first awoke suspicion; he struck an unfamiliar note, and the East Windsor brethren not only were quick to detect it, but to identify it with the New Haven School. No mistake could have been greater. So far as theology was concerned, "Christian Nurture" was far enough from either; but if a comparison were made, it leaned quite as much toward East Windsor as

toward New Haven. In fact, had the former been true to the earlier school which it championed, it might have claimed the treatise as against New Haven, appropriating its "older orthodoxy," and condoning its departure from it. But at heart the book was with neither, and each opened fire on it, — the pamphlet, "What does Dr. Bushnell Mean?" having come from New Haven. Dr. Tyler's criticism was followed by a juster and far abler review by Dr. Charles Hodge, of Princeton, whose chief objection was that "he has not rested them (the facts of conversion by means of Christian nurture) upon the covenant and promise of God, but resolved the whole matter into organic laws, explaining away both depravity and grace," and presented the whole subject "in a naturalistic attitude."<sup>1</sup> That is, Bushnell struck the modern note which it was the boast of Princeton at that time not to have heard. A still abler review came from Dr. J. W. Nevin, of the German Reformed Church,<sup>2</sup> more sympathetic, but still critical at the same point; namely, the tone of naturalism running through the book. Both reviews, however, were one with him as to the corporate nature of the church, and furnished a contrast with his New England critics, who had so wholly surrendered to individualism that the other seemed hardly less than heretical in itself. These and other criticisms, many of them personal and hectoring in

<sup>1</sup> *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, p. 27, 1847.

<sup>2</sup> *Weekly Messenger*, Chambersburg, Pa., 1847. Four articles.



tone, betrayed Bushnell into a reply which he styled "An Argument for Discourses on Christian Nurture," and published under the title, "Views of Christian Nurture and of Subjects Adjacent Thereto."<sup>1</sup> The wisdom of this reply has been doubted, and in fact it was regretted by Bushnell himself, not because he did not consider the defense sound, but because of his relentless severity in dealing with his theological neighbors. His attack was just, but it was a descent. An able defense of his positions was mingled with exposures of personal animosity and intellectual weakness in his critics such as all strong men are liable to encounter, but which wise men generally pass by. But if measured by a lower standard, it was magnificent fighting, spirited but good-tempered, and leaving nothing more to be said on the subject. It cleared a long-standing score that had been growing for years, and brought both sides fully into the light. Whether wise or not, if it did not lessen attacks in the future, it kept his critics to the proper subject of criticism.

We cannot pass by "Christian Nurture" as it appears in the later full edition without once more calling attention to it as an achievement in the world of New England theology. In point of influence, it is second only to that of Edwards in which he ended the union of Church and State by reassertion of man's individual relations to God, an achievement that required another of an

<sup>1</sup> Edward Hunt, Hartford, 1847. (Out of print.)

opposite nature to mark the time of religious progress. The individual and the corporate will always call for each other, as deep calls unto deep. The greatness of the book as an intellectual achievement has not had full recognition, chiefly because its theological surroundings have not been understood. It is not in its essence a discovery, for its main idea lies at the bottom of all the historic religions. It is doubtful if Bushnell at first clearly recognized it as a return to former methods except in some general way. It is well that he did not, for a formal return was neither needed nor possible. Nor was it a conscious prophecy of the method of religious culture that was about to come in; he worked at closer hand. The book sprang out of an imperative sense of what needed to be done; and the fact that it turned out to be, in effect, a semi-repudiation of the environing theology, was an incident and not due to purpose. It was not an attack, but it undermined and displaced, and prepared the way for that which was to come. For it cannot be denied that the conception of spiritual regeneration, and of its means and methods, which prevailed at the time has largely passed away, and that everything except the simple need of it has yielded to a conception based upon and composed chiefly of religious nurture. The various theories of depravity, of the will, of divine grace, of the action of the Holy Spirit, of sanctification, have either disappeared, or been so altered as hardly to be recognized. In its place are con-

ceptions of human nature and its moral condition, of heredity and environment, of sin, of the will, of moral culture and religious experience, which are most unlike those they have displaced. Biblical interpretation, psychology, and the closer study of life in all its departments are forcing theology to recognize the fact that Christian character is chiefly a matter of Christian nurture. A universal truth, supported by universal analogies, is coming into view, and is already in process of realization,—an ancient truth, but reappearing in the light of modern thought and exact science.



**CHAPTER VII**  
**THEORY OF LANGUAGE**

“There can be no exercise in the whole business of instruction more useful to the mind than the analysis of sentences in the concentrated light of grammar and logic. It brings one into the sanctuary of human thought. All else is but standing in the outer court. He who is without may indeed offer incense, but he who penetrates within, worships and adores. It is here that the man of science, trained to close thought and clear vision, surveys the various objects of his study with a more expanded view, and a more discriminating mind. It is here that the interpreter, accustomed to the force and freshness of natural language, is prepared to explain God’s revealed word with more power and accuracy. It is here that the orator learns to wield with a heavier arm the weapons of his warfare. It is here that every one who loves to think beholds the deep things of the human spirit, and learns to regard with holy reverence the sacred symbols of human thought.” — Professor JOSIAH WILLARD GIBBS, *Christian Spectator*, 1837, vol. ix. p. 120.

## CHAPTER VII

### THEORY OF LANGUAGE

NEARLY every undertaking of Bushnell in theology was an effort to escape some sort of restriction. He found himself in a very narrow world, — strong and intense in its piety, not without considerable learning, seeing far on certain lines but blind on others. It was shut off from the larger currents of thought by its wide separation from the old world. Its great men were solitary thinkers, who spun their systems with but little mutual criticism or consultation, dominated by one great master. The dialectic habit with such men necessarily led to a hard and rigid use of language. Their strength lay in definition and logic, which were often used in such a way as to suggest a corral rather than a teaching.<sup>1</sup>

The thing insisted on in their frequent controversies was definition. The closer it was made the sharper grew the debate, since one or the other

<sup>1</sup> The pupils of Dr. N. W. Taylor remember nothing in his lectures more clearly than his scorn of those writers on theology who were "too lazy to make definitions," which he declared to be "the severest labor of the human mind." This is undoubtedly the case if the definitions are expected to compass the truths of theology. It was chiefly at this point that Bushnell revolted against this master in dialectics.

of the combatants was sure to discover, through some unguarded loophole, truth lying outside of the definition that called for re-definition. Thus an endless process was established, consisting in efforts to bring the infinite within the finite. It was given to Bushnell to have a clear sight of the truth beyond the finite boundaries. He saw that the greater part of theology lay in that region, and that it could not be reached or expressed except by breaking through or overleaping these verbal limitations. In his opinion there could be no justification of definition without first entering into an analysis of language itself, with a view of finding out its function and scope as a medium between the mind and the world of sense. He could not advance one step in the discussion of theological themes with the expectation of being understood, unless he could in some way break up or get over this hard literalism and make his readers feel the meaning that really lies in and behind the words. Had he lived a half century later, he would have had comparatively little need to explain himself. Language is regarded to-day very much as he conceived it, while Biblical criticism and a more rational theory of inspiration have removed from the field of debate certain parts of Scripture that were then chief factors in it. But Bushnell did not have the advantage of the later criticism, and himself needed a personal deliverance from interpretations that were intolerable to him. He chose what seemed to him the only thor-



ough method ; namely, an examination of the nature of language itself.<sup>1</sup>

But there were still stronger reasons, which will appear in the following quotations : —

“ We find, then, that every language contains two distinct departments: the physical department, — that which provides names for *things*; and the intellectual department, — that which provides names for *thought* and *spirit*. In the former, names are simple representatives of things, which even the animals may learn. In the latter,

<sup>1</sup> “ It is remarkable that Dr. Bushnell, whose studies kept him wholly ignorant of Kant, is nevertheless dealing with Kant's problem in his rather diffuse *Dissertation on Language*, and in his far clearer, compacter, and finer production, *Our Gospel a Gift to the Imagination*. He saw, and it is a remarkable witness to his genius, that thought is inseparable from sense-forms, and so-called abstract thinking is but thought with the sensuous accompaniment attenuated to the last degree.” (Dr. George A. Gordon, *The Christ of To-day*, p. 287.)

Kant says the difficulty in reaching a purely non-sensuous theory of the universe lies in the constitution of the human mind as compounded of sense and intellect. Bushnell says the difficulty lies in language, — the instrument of the mind. They face the same problem, but Bushnell escapes from it by contending that the constitution of the mind is given in language as nowhere else, and that though it is a sense-form, it represents a spiritual meaning to which it is essentially allied. The usual criticism of Bushnell is that he puts the limitation in language rather than in the power of the mind to conceive the infinite realities of religion, — in utterance rather than in conception. Had the point occurred to him, it is possible that he would have hesitated to place the limitation in the unchanging nature of mind, when it could justly be put upon the instrument of expression that can be made fuller and more exact, as the world, which is but a symbol of thought, becomes more clearly understood. One seems like a baring of the gate; the other only some difficulty in getting to it.

the names of things are used as representatives of thought, and cannot, therefore, be learned save by beings of intelligence — (*intus lego*) — that is, beings who can read the inner sense, or receive the inner contents of words; beings in whom the Logos of the creation finds a correspondent logos, or reason, to receive and employ the types it offers in their true power (p. 24). . . . In this view, which it is not rash to believe will some time be fully established, the outer world is seen to be a vast menstruum of thought or intelligence. There is a logos in the forms of things, by which they are prepared to serve as types or images of what is inmost in our souls; and then there is a logos of construction in the relations of space, the position, qualities, connections, and predicates of things, by which they are framed into grammar. In one word, the outer world, which envelops our being, is itself language, the power of all language.”<sup>1</sup>

. . . “Since all words, but such as relate to necessary truths, are inexact representations of thought, mere types or analogies, or, where the types are lost beyond recovery, only proximate expressions of the thoughts named; it follows that language will be ever trying to mend its own deficiencies, by multiplying its forms of re-

<sup>1</sup> Bushnell is throughout this essay greatly indebted to Professor Josiah W. Gibbs, the instructor in Biblical literature in the Yale Divinity School while he was a student. He recognizes the indebtedness in a tone of gratitude and reverence shown to no other writer except Coleridge. The article from which he quotes is in *The Christian Spectator*, vol. ix.

presentation. As, too, the words made use of generally carry something false with them, as well as something true, associating form with the truths represented, when really there is no form; it will also be necessary, on this account, to multiply words or figures, and thus to present the subject on opposite sides or many sides. Thus, as form battles form, and one form neutralizes another, all the insufficiencies of words are filled out, the contrarieties liquidated, and the mind settles into a full and just apprehension of the pure spiritual truth. Accordingly we never come so near to a truly well-rounded view of any truth as when it is offered paradoxically; that is, under contradictions; that is, under two or more dictions, which, taken as dictions, are contrary one to the other" (p. 55).

"The views of language and interpretation I have here offered suggest the very great difficulty, if not impossibility, of mental science and religious dogmatism. In all such uses, or attempted uses, the effort is to make language answer a purpose that is against its nature. The 'winged words' are required to serve as beasts of burden; or, what is no better, to forget their poetic life as messengers of the air, and stand still, fixed upon the ground, as wooden statues of truths. . . .

"Can there be produced, in human language, a complete and proper Christian theology; can the Christian truth be offered in the moulds of any dogmatic statement? What is the Christian

truth? Preëminently and principally, it is the expression of God,—God coming into expression through histories and rites, through an incarnation, and through language,—in one syllable, by the WORD. The endeavor is, by means of expression, and under the laws of expression, to set forth God,—his providence and his government, and what is more and higher than all, God's own feeling, his truth, love, justice, compassion. . . .

“There is, however, one hope for mental and religious truth and their final settlement, which I confess I see but dimly, and can but faintly express or indicate. It is that physical science, leading the way, setting outward things in their true proportions, opening up their true contents, revealing their genesis and final causes and laws, and weaving all into the unity of a real universe, will so perfect our knowledges and conceptions of them that we can use them, in the second department of language, with more exactness. . . . And then language will be as much more full and intelligent, as it has more of God's intelligence, in the system of nature, imparted to its symbols. For undoubtedly the whole universe of nature is a perfect analogon of the whole universe of thought or spirit. Therefore, as nature becomes truly a universe only through science revealing its universal laws, the true universe of thought and spirit cannot sooner be conceived”<sup>1</sup> (p. 78).

<sup>1</sup> Bushnell here anticipates with striking accuracy the fourth chapter of Mr. John Fiske's *Through Nature to God*, on “The Dramatic Unity of Nature.”

We have made this quotation not only because it illustrates Bushnell's range in a high realm of thought, but because it is, as his biographer says, "the key to Horace Bushnell."

It was not a theory brought from without and adopted as best suited to his purpose, but was a reflection of the natural play of his mind. It is not only the key, but it shows in what a natural way he fell in with the Greek use of the Logos, from which he never wholly departed, however heavy the stress of criticism.

His theory seems fatal to theology as an exact science, and he presses it to that conclusion. We shall let him make his explanation in his own words. His friend, Dr. William W. Patton, gives this account of a conversation with him, at the time when he was under heavy criticism for the theological opinions of the book "God in Christ: "

"Dr. Bushnell and myself were riding together to a meeting of the Hartford Central Association, and the conversation turned on theological discussions. 'Why is it,' said I, 'that you complain that you are so generally misunderstood? Where you are criticised you say that the critics misapprehend your positions; and they reply that you ought to express yourself more clearly. Why can you not do so?' His answer was substantially this: 'It is because of the different views which they and I take of the human soul and of the relation of language to spiritual truth. They succeed easily in so expressing their ideas as to be understood by

their readers; but it is because they deal with subjects mechanically, and not according to nature. There, for instance, is Dr. —, my customary assailant. He writes about the human spirit as if it were a machine under the laws of mechanics; and, of course, what he says is perfectly intelligible, like any other treatise on matter; only what he says is not true! But I conceive of the soul in its living nature, — as free, and intelligent, and sensitive; as under vital and not mechanical laws. Language, too, for that reason, is not so much descriptive as suggestive, being figurative throughout, even where it deals with spiritual truth. Therefore, an experience is needed to interpret words.' ”

It was by this gate that he went out from the world about him into the world of spiritual reality and freedom where his work lay. It must not be supposed that he abjured theology as a science because he refused to be bound by definition, nor that he slighted reason because he set aside the forms of logic. He simply refused to put infinite things into finite forms as wholly containing them. He protested against treating thought and spirit as measurable by sense; he asserted that spiritual and moral realities lie behind language, and that words have their origin in these realities, though they do not define them, but only suggest their scope and significance. It is under such a conception of language that he explains his use of creeds. He likes them so well that he says he is

“ready to accept as great a number as fall in my way.”

If a fundamental criticism were to be made of his entire work in theology, it would be made at the point of this theory, for it covers the whole of it. He may at times disagree with himself, and he often goes far afield, but he always comes back to this conception of language for explanation or defense. Whether true or false, it runs throughout his theology, and makes it substantially a unit. Stated briefly, it was an exchange of definition for expression. His entrance into the company of New England theologians with such a theory was like Copernicus appearing among the Ptolemaists.





**CHAPTER VIII**  
**"GOD IN CHRIST"**

“ But even less than literature and the Church and criticism can theology remain unaffected by this return, as it were, into His very presence. We all feel the distance placed by fifty years of the most radical and penetrating critical discussions between us and the older theology, and as the distance widens, the theology that then reigned grows less credible, because less relevant to living mind. Does this mean that the days of definite theological beliefs are over, or not, rather, that the attempt ought to be made to restate them in more living and relevant terms? One thing seems clear: if a Christian theology means a theology of Christ, at once concerning Him and derived from Him, then to construct one ought, because of our greater knowledge of Him and His history, to be more possible to-day than at any previous moment. And if this is clear, then the most provisional attempt at performing the possible is more dutiful than the selfish and idle acquiescence that would simply leave the old theology and the new criticism standing side by side, unrelated and unreconciled.” — Professor A. M. FAIRBAIRN, D. D., *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 296.

## CHAPTER VIII

### “GOD IN CHRIST”

“THE year 1848 was the central point in the life of Horace Bushnell. It was a year of great experiences, great thoughts, great labors.” So his wife writes in his “Biography.” The outcome was the volume “God in Christ.” The order in this category is rightly given. Whatever came from him was first the result of experience. He was not chiefly a speculator in the world of thought, nor a dreamer in a world of visions, but a practical man in a real world. The death of his child five years before had not ceased to bear fruit in revelations of the fatherhood of God. “He took my son to his own more fatherly bosom, and revealed in my bosom the same expectation and faith of his own eternal Son.” He read the Life of Madame Guyon, and Upham’s “Interior Life,” and Fénelon, and yielded somewhat to a mystical wave of thought that was then passing over New England. He touched “quietism,” but quickly and by a necessity of his nature reacted from it, yet not without retaining something of its value in the practical world where he belonged and worked. A crisis seems to have been reached in an experience described as follows:—

“On an early morning of February, his wife awoke, to hear that the light they had waited for, more than they that watch for the morning, had risen indeed. She asked, ‘What have you seen?’ He replied, ‘The gospel.’ It came to him at last, after all his thought and study, not as something reasoned out, but as an inspiration, — a revelation from the mind of God himself. The full meaning of his answer he embodied at once in a sermon on ‘Christ the Form of the Soul,’ from the text, ‘Until Christ be formed in you.’ The very title of this sermon expresses his spiritually illuminated conception of Christ as the indwelling, formative life of the soul, the new creating power of righteousness for humanity. And this conception was soon after more adequately set forth in his book, ‘God in Christ.’ That he regarded this as a crisis in his spiritual life is evident from his not infrequent reference to it among his Christian friends.”

He regarded this experience as a “personal discovery of Christ, and of God as represented in Him.” To those about him he seemed “a new man, or, rather, the same man with a heavenly investiture.” Or, as he himself explained it: “I seemed to pass a boundary. I had never been very legal in my Christian life, but now I passed from those partial seeings, glimpses, and doubts, into a clearer knowledge of God and into his inspirations, which I have never wholly lost. The change was into faith, — a sense of the freeness of God, and the ease of approach to Him.”

He at once moved toward expression. The vision must be translated into form, its implications detected, and its reasonableness made clear. The reality and intensity of this experience must not be overlooked as one reads the book to which it gave rise and the criticism that followed. More weight must be attached to his conclusions than if they had been the mere fruit of reflection; he had felt and he had seen, and the force of life was behind his contentions. It was then that he began to define Christian doctrine as "formulated Christian experience."

By a conjunction of events that seem providential, the amplest opportunity was offered for speaking on the subject which had been thus opened to him. Almost simultaneously invitations came from the Divinity School in Cambridge, then unqualifiedly Unitarian; from the Theological Seminary at Andover, where the battle with Unitarianism had been fought, and from the Divinity School in New Haven, to give the addresses at their graduating exercises. Bushnell promptly accepted these invitations, and thus reopened the question that had indeed not ceased to be discussed. But he will not enter into the wide arena as a debater of the old fashion; he will go as a mediator, if at all. He cannot be understood at this period without keeping in mind the spiritual elevation and intensity that possessed him. He had seen a heavenly vision, and his obedience to it was full and imperative. This experience subdued the

polemic and revived the "vein of comprehensive-ness," which was more congenial to him. He understood the relation to the two parties into which "Christian Nurture" had brought him, and stood between them, hoping to win the blessing of the peacemaker. In a letter to Dr. Bartol, written in 1847, when under accusation of heresy, he said: "I consider myself to be an orthodox man, and yet I think I can state my orthodox faith in such a way that no serious Unitarian will conflict with me, or feel that I am beyond the terms of reason."<sup>1</sup>

The first of the sermons forming this book was preached as a *concio ad clerum*, in the North now the United Church in New Haven, before the General Association of Connecticut, which had suggested to him as a subject the "Divinity of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

As this discussion became the ground for a large part of the criticism he afterward encountered, we give its main points.

<sup>1</sup> This was before Rev. Theodore Parker had preached the sermon at West Roxbury, on "The Transient and the Permanent in Religion," which would have led Bushnell to speak less hopefully.

<sup>2</sup> The writer, then a student in college, heard the sermon, but recalls little except the appearance of the preacher and the rhythmic music of his voice. His delivery was without stress or passion, but full of quiet dignity, and serious to the last degree, — almost a solitary meditation on his absorbing theme. But the writer remembers two remarks made at the close of the service; one from a saintly woman, — "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Her plaint found an echo soon after in the pamphlet, "What does Dr. Bushnell Mean?" The other remark came from a theological student, — "I could kiss the soul of Dr. Bushnell." What was darkness to one was light to the other.

Taking as a text 1 John i. 2, he states that his purpose is to show that "the reality of Christ is God," and that the term "was manifested" covers and contains this fact. He defines the divinity of Christ as follows: "He is in such a sense God, or God manifested, that the unknown term of his nature, that which we are most in doubt of, and about which we are least capable of any positive information, is the human" (p. 123). It should be stated at the outset that this definition, which has been and is still more criticised than any other made by Bushnell in connection with the trinity, was due in part to the fact that his chief perplexity as to the person of Christ grew out of the orthodox doctrine of two distinct or distinctly active natures.

The tritheism implied in three metaphysical personalities in the essential Godhead was equally perplexing. In order to escape from both, he merged the personality of Christ in the Father, and so escaped the first difficulty. By refusing to penetrate the interior nature of God he escaped the other. His method may not be correct, and the vagueness of his treatment of the humanity of Christ raises the suspicion that it is not, but it is easy to see why he followed it: he saw at the time no other way of escape.

After quoting the classical texts on the subject, he infers that the sinlessness of Jesus "must be because the divine is so far uppermost in him as to suspend the proper manhood of his person. He

does not any longer act the man ; practically speaking, the man sleeps in him. He acts the divine, not the human, and the only true reality in him, as far as moral conduct is concerned, is the divine ” (p. 126).

He insists with passionate reiteration that “ We want Jesus as divine, not as human. . . . God is what we want, not a man ; God revealed through man, that we may see his heart, and hide our guilty nature in the bosom of his love ; God so identified with our race, as to signify the possible union and eternal identification of our nature with his ” (p. 127).

He sees no difficulty in maintaining the essential divinity of Christ “ till we begin to speculate or dogmatize about the humanity, or find ourselves in contact with the more commonly accepted doctrine of trinity ” (p. 129).

This accepted doctrine he discusses at length, stating it as follows : —

“ It seems to be agreed by the orthodox, that there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the divine nature. These three persons, too, are generally regarded as belonging, not to the *machina Dei*, by which God is revealed, but to the very *esse*, the substantial being of God, or the interior contents of his being. They are declared to be equal ; all to be infinite ; all to be the same in substance ; all to be one. . . . A very large portion of the Christian teachers hold three real living persons in the interior nature of God ; that



is, three consciousnesses, wills, hearts, understandings " (p. 130).<sup>1</sup>

He contends that this is contrary to "the very idea of a person; as well hold that three units are one unit." After describing the way in which *person* is used, he infers that the result is "three vital personal Gods, and back of them, as a ground of unity, an Inorganic Deity," which "leaves no unity at all." Following Schleiermacher, he contends that under a metaphysical tri-personality "the proper deity of Christ is not held." "He is begotten, sent, supported, directed by the Father, in such a sense as really annihilates his deity."

Having thus stated his objections to the orthodox view on the ground of its tritheism, he raises the question, "How shall we resolve the divinity or deity of Christ . . . so as to make it consist with the proper unity of God?" The tenor of his answer is contained in the following passage:—

"The trinity we seek will be a trinity that results of necessity from the *revelation* of God to man. I do not undertake to fathom the interior being of God, and tell how it is composed. That is a matter too high for me, and I think for us all. I only insist that, assuming the strictest unity and even simplicity of God's nature, He could not be

<sup>1</sup> The writer of the series of letters in the *New York Evangelist*, reprinted in 1849 under the title: "What does Dr. Bushnell Mean?" denies that any "Trinitarian ever said or believed that the three persons of the Godhead are one person." The denial overlooks Bushnell's full discussion of the meaning of *person*, that sets the charge in a different light.

efficiently or sufficiently revealed to us without evolving a trinity of persons, such as we meet in the Scriptures. These persons or personalities are the *dramatis personæ* of revelation, and their reality is measured by what of the infinite they convey in these finite forms. As such, they bear, on the one hand, a relation to God, who is to be conveyed or imported into knowledge; on the other, they are related to our human capacities and wants, being that presentation of God which is necessary to make Him a subject of thought, or bring Him within the discourse of reason; that also which is necessary to produce mutuality, or terms of conversableness, between us and Him, and pour his love most effectually into our feeling" (p. 137).

This conception is enforced by showing the impossibility of knowing God as the Absolute, and insisting on "a trinity, and incarnation, and other like devices of revelation" as the only means of knowing Him. "It is only through relations, contrasts, actions, and reactions that we come into a knowledge of God." He attributes to God "a capacity of self-expression, — a generative power of form," by which he can "represent himself in the finite. . . . This is the Logos, the Word, elsewhere called the 'form of God.'" As "the human form of our race . . . God will live himself into the acquaintance and biographic history of the world." Here, of course, he enters into the Sabellian atmosphere. Having stated the proper divinity of Christ, he proceeds to discuss "the dif-

ficulties created by the supposed relations of the divine to the human in the person of Christ." He meets them through the doctrine of the Logos, — as God puts himself under limitations in creation, so "God may act a human personality without being measured by it" as in other created forms. After much discussion of this point, he denies "two distinct substances" in Christ, and contends that "the reality of Christ is what he expresses of God" (p. 156).

In respect to the obedience of Christ he makes a significant remark indicating his Sabellian tendency: "Man obeys for what obedience is, but the subject obedient state of Christ is accepted for what it conveys, or expresses." This remark lets in the Grotian theory of the atonement, to which the Sabellian theory of the person of Christ easily lends itself, both theories being based on expression. "And so it may be that Christ sanctifies the law that we have broken, erecting it again, in its original sacredness and majesty, before all mankind" (p. 161). His discussion brings him face to face with the passibility of God, which he accepts, though acknowledging that "the mystery of the divine-human must remain a mystery." Still, he gravitates toward an affirmative answer to his question, "Whether God, by a mysterious union with the human, can so far employ the element of suffering as to make it a vehicle for the expression of his own grace and tenderness" (p. 162).

At last he comes to a distinct and full statement of his conception of Christ: —

“Perhaps it may be imagined that I intend, in holding this view of the incarnation, or the person of Christ, to deny that he had a human soul, or anything human but a human body. I only deny that his human soul, or nature, is to be spoken of, or looked upon, as having a *distinct* subsistence, so as to live, think, learn, worship, suffer, by itself. Disclaiming all thought of denying, or affirming anything as regards the interior composition or construction of his person, I insist that he stands before us in simple unity, one person, the divine-human, representing the qualities of his double parentage as the Son of God and the son of Mary. I do not say that he is composed of three elements, a divine person, a human soul, and a human body; nor of these that they are distinctly three, or absolutely one. I look upon him only in the external way; for he comes to be viewed externally in what may be expressed through him, and not in any other way. As to any metaphysical or speculative difficulties involved in the union of the divine and the human, I dismiss them all, by observing that Christ is not here for the sake of something accomplished in his metaphysical or psychological interior, but for that which appears and is outwardly signified in his life. And it is certainly competent for God to work out the expression of his own feeling, and his union to the race, in what way most approves itself to him. Regarding Christ in this exterior, and, as it were, æsthetic way, he is that Holy Thing in which my God is brought to me, — brought even

down to a fellow relation with me. I shall not call him two. I shall not decompose him and label off his doings, one to the credit of his divinity, and another to the credit of his humanity. I shall receive him, in the simplicity of faith, as my one Lord and Saviour, nor any the less so that he is my brother" (p. 163).

After meeting the objection that this view makes Christ "too exclusively divine," he surprises the reader by putting in a criticism of the Sabellian theory as representing that "God is the Father in virtue of his creation and government of the world." Bushnell contends that he is not the Father "as one God," but that he is so named as incidental to the central fact or mystery of the incarnation. So far as Sabellianism is a theory of the mode of the divine existence, Bushnell is not a Sabellian, for he will not enter that mystery; but so far as it stands for a self-expressing power of God in the Son who thus reveals the Father, he is a Sabellian, — he will not go farther into deity than the Logos. But this refusal does not relieve him from the designation. The distinction he makes cuts the ancient heresy in two, one part of which becomes increasingly defensible under modern thought, and largely stands for the doctrine.

If asked whether he means simply "to assert a modal trinity, or three modal persons," he says: "I must answer obscurely, just as I answered in regard to the humanity of Christ. If I say that they are modal *only*, as the word is commonly used,

I may deny more than I am justified in denying, or am required to deny, by the ground I have taken. I will only say that the trinity, or the three persons, are given to me for the sake of their external expression, not for the internal investigation of their contents. If I use them rationally or wisely, then I shall use them according to their object. I must not intrude upon their interior nature, either by assertion or denial. They must have their reality to me in what they express when taken as the wording forth of God. Perhaps I shall come nearest to the simple, positive idea of the trinity here maintained if I call it an INSTRUMENTAL TRINITY, and the persons INSTRUMENTAL PERSONS " (p. 175).

If required to answer whether the three persons are eternal, or only occasional and to be discontinued, he says: " Undoubtedly the distinction of the Word, or the power of self-representation in God thus denominated, is eternal. And in this we have a permanent ground of possibility for the threefold impersonation called trinity. Accordingly, if God has been eternally revealed, or revealing himself to created minds, it is likely always to have been and always to be as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Consequently, it may always be in this manner that we shall get our impressions of God, and have our communion with Him " (p. 177).

He grants, however, that St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 28) discourages this view. The trend of his thought evidently is towards a trinity of expression only,

leaving room for a possible corresponding basis in the divine nature. He will not try to find intimations of an analogous triad in St. John or St. Paul or Plato: "Let us rather baptize our over-curious spirit into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teach it quietly to rest in what of God's infinite nature it may there receive. We talk of simplicity, often, when upon this matter of trinity, — as we rightly may. Oh, that we had simplicity enough to let God be God, and the revelation He gives us, a revelation! — neither trying to make Him a finite person after our own human model, nor ourselves three, that we may bring our humanity up to solve the mysteries of his absolute, infinite substance! There is no so true simplicity as that which takes the practical at its face, uses instruments as instruments, however complex and mysterious, and refuses to be cheated of the uses of life by an over-curious questioning of that which God has given for its uses" (p. 179).

We have in these words a repetition of that cry of his heart when undergoing his first struggle with the subject, — "My heart wants the Father; my heart wants the Son; my heart wants the Holy Ghost." However much he may speculate on the question, — and he could keep pace with the most diligent, in that play of mind, — there are two things that go before and invest all his thinking; — he will make room for nothing that does not ally itself with experience; and he will not let go the clue that connects him with nature in its larger sense.

The incarnation is simply "another outgoing from the Absolute into the human ;" it has analogies in nature that may be more than such under the light of the Logos, — a reality large enough to suggest a universal law. His theory, whether orthodox or not, is not weak, nor is it without a vast amount of substance. If he does not plant the trinity on the interior nature of the Deity, he puts it into the Logos, in which and through which is all of God that is known or can be known. Back of it lies the Eternal Mystery.

Bushnell refused to be called a Sabellian, and yet he is so named, and not wholly without reason. The difference is real, but not enough to relieve him of the imputation. Sabellianism asserts a trinity of manifestations, and denies that God exists eternally as a triad of persons. Bushnell assents to the first, but, as we have said, declines to make any assertion, positive or negative, in respect to the second. God may or may not exist as a trinity of persons, but He has the power of expressing himself in three forms, and in how many other forms we do not know ; it is a mystery into which he will not enter. But the substance of Sabellianism lies in its positive assertion, with which he was in accord. Bushnell, however, should have full credit for the amount of meaning he put into his refusal to dogmatize as to the interior nature of God. He would not touch that mystery, simply because it is a mystery and beyond conception. There was nothing concerning the Godhead which the over-



brave theologians of New England did not attempt to make clear on the strength of a few passages of Scripture, doctrinal traditions, and a dialectic framed to meet certain conceived necessities of the divine government. Bushnell's entire career, more even than he knew, was a protest against these ways of thinking and reasoning. More also than he knew was he leading the way into a habit of thought that is becoming daily more imperative, namely, a humble and careful search after grounds of belief. While he found no reason for asserting an eternal triad in the divine being, he saw many reasons for asserting a *Logos*, an eternal self-expressing power in God which appeared as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That is, he was wide open to the growing and already dominant conception of the universe as a manifestation of the immanent God. Under this conception he found full room for a trinity of manifestation and expression, confident that a truth which embraced the universe was sufficient to cover the revelation of God in humanity. In an article on "The Christian Trinity a Practical Truth," not in answer to criticism, but to explain himself, and to state some change of opinion, he goes over the subject again with great care. He does not accept the trinity because it has uses, but accepting it, he finds uses.

"In this respect, the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, practically accepted and freely used, with never a question about the speculative nature of the mystery, with never a doubt of God's rigid

and perfect unity, will be found to answer exactly the great problem of the practical life of religion ; viz., how to keep alive the profoundest, most adequate sense of God's infinity, and, at the same time, the most vivid and intensest sense of his social and mutual relationship as a person." (Building Eras, p. 122.)

The trinity is needed first, "to save the dimensions or practical infinity of God, consistently with his personality." His object here is to escape pantheism, and also to show that Unitarianism does not cover the infinity of God by its "presentation of a Universal Father, one person." The second use is summed up in the phrase "an economic Trinity ;" that is, on account of its practical relation to our character and our state as sinners ; it is "the instrument and coefficient of a supernatural grace or redemptive economy." He is careful to state that these are not reasons for accepting the trinity, but having accepted it, he finds them. From this point he goes a long way toward assenting to the Nicene formula, but he is always retreating into his theory of language, and falling back on his ingrained sense of the universe as an expression of God ; he cannot quite put his new wine into old bottles.

The discourse at Andover on "Dogma and Spirit" consisted in a statement of the causes that led to the schism in the churches by which the two parties became known as Orthodox and Unitarian, and in a plea for reunion. He protests against

suffering opinion to pass into dogma under the sanction of authority, and contends that the gospel, being a manifestation of God through the medium of expression, "requires for an inlet, not reason, or logic, or a scientific power, so much as a right sensibility."

The chief significance of the address lay in the fact that it was a flag of truce raised while the battle was at its height, and neither side had yet showed signs of weakening or of approaching defeat. Nothing of the spirit that pervaded the ranks on either side found its way into his words. He covered both with explanatory reasons, and lifted them into a region of the spirit where dogma and denial of dogma sink, not out of existence, but into subservience. A single quotation gives the keynote to the whole discourse, and explains why one side grew more bitter in its criticism, and why the other side hesitated over accepting concessions that were attended with strictures so severe.

"The manner in which dogmatism necessitates division may be well enough illustrated by the mournful separation which has taken place in the New England churches. Had we been embodied in the simple love of God under some such badge, for example, as the Apostles' Creed, it is very probable to me that the 'causes of the division would never have existed. But we had an article which asserted a metaphysical trinity, and this made the assertion of a metaphysical unity inevitable; nay, more, even desirable. So we had a

theory of atonement, another of depravity, another of regeneration, or the ingeneration of character, which required the appearance, so to speak, of antagonistic theories. Our theologic culture, meantime, was so limited, on one side, that we took what was really our own opinion only, to be the unalterable truth of God; on the other, the side of the revolt, too limited to perceive the insufficiency of dogma as a fruit of the mere understanding, too limited not to take the opposite, with the same seriousness and totality of conviction. On this side they assumed the sufficiency of opinions and of speculative comprehension, in a more unrestrained sense than had been done before. They even fell to the work of constructing a religion wholly within the moulds of natural reason itself, admitting nothing transcendent in the reach of faith, or the manifestation of the life of God. They asserted liberty, as they must to vindicate their revolt, producing, however, meantime, the most intensely human, and in that sense, the most intensely opinionative religion ever invented, under the name of Christianity.

“Have they no reason, together with us, to take up now, at last, some suspicion of the insufficiency of dogma and of all mere speculative opinions formed within the life of nature? May we not all begin to see that the ministration of life is somewhat broader, deeper, more sufficient, more divine? And what if we all, feeling our deep want, and sorrowing over the shame our human wisdom has

cost us, should come back together to the simple Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, there to enter into peace through the blood of Jesus, and there to abide in the fullness of love and brotherhood. Or if we should kneel down together before Him, and say, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,' and go on thus, to — 'the life everlasting,' what invisible minister of God, hanging as a listener about us, would not join us, at the close, and say 'AMEN.'

"Perhaps it may be too soon to look for any so beautiful result as this. But it is not too soon for us to be setting the human in the place of the human, the divine in the place of the divine; to be drawing, all, towards simplicity; to pray more, and expect more light to come of the Life; to be more in love, and less in opinion; oftener to bless, and as much less often to judge" (pp. 338-340).

The discourse at Cambridge on "The Atonement" was afterward expanded into "The Vicarious Sacrifice," which will be considered farther on.



**CHAPTER IX**  
**DAYS OF ACCUSATION**

"I shall merely enumerate a few of the most common of these feelings that present obstacles to the pursuit or propagation of truth: Aversion to doubt; desire of a supposed happy medium; the love of system; the dread of the character of inconsistency; the love of novelty; the dread of innovation; undue deference to human authority; the love of approbation, and the dread of censure; regard to seeming expediency." — *WHATELY'S Annotations on Bacon's Essay on Truth*, p. 10.

"The principles on which I have taught: First, The establishment of positive truth, instead of the negative destruction of error. Secondly, That truth is made up of two opposite propositions, and not found in a *via media* between the two. Thirdly, That spiritual truth is discerned by the spirit, instead of intellectually in propositions; and, therefore, truth should be taught suggestively, not dogmatically. Fourthly, That belief in the human character of Christ's humanity must be antecedent to belief in his divine origin. Fifthly, That Christianity, as its teachers should, works from the inward to the outward, and not *vice versa*. Sixthly, The soul of goodness in things evil." — *Life of F. W. Robertson*, vol. ii. p. 160.



## CHAPTER IX

### DAYS OF ACCUSATION

DR. BUSHNELL wrote few letters beyond those addressed to his family. His friends were near at hand, and his relations to them were, for the most part, direct. But the letters we have are of utmost value as showing the oneness of the theologian and the man. He is reticent as an author, but among friends he was a free talker, hiding nothing, and ready to express his entire thought and feeling. The only extensive correspondence carried on by him was with the Rev. C. A. Bartol, D. D., of Boston, a catholic-minded man of genius, who represented the more spiritual side of Unitarianism. A sermon preached in Boston by Bushnell in June, 1846, on "Barbarism, the First Danger," seems to mark the beginning of "a friendship which became one of the most valued of his life, and a source of untold refreshment in the desert of controversy through which he was about to pass."

The value of this friendship, theologically, was great. Through it he came into close contact with Unitarianism on its most real and representative side. So far as personal sympathy had weight, its attraction could not have been stronger. The

relation proved to be a fine test of the reality of his opinions. While it begot a charity and respect for the other side, — things greatly needed at the time, — it does not seem to have had much effect in moulding his views.

The following letters were written to Dr. Bartol, one just before, the others soon after, the publication of "God in Christ."

HARTFORD, October 11, 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — I thank you for your very kind letter. It is refreshing to know somebody that dare let out his heart; for I begin to find that I am looked upon hereabouts as a mortally dangerous person. I think I have never seemed to be quite so much isolated as now; not that I am really and finally cast off, but every man seems to say, and almost every one actually says, "When is the book coming out?" . . . I think I understand how much is depending on it, and, of course, what my responsibilities are. Still, though it is the "crisis of my life," as you intimate, I suffer no anxiety whatever as to the result. Not because it may not, in one view, be important to me, but because I am willing to trust myself, and can do it calmly, to God and the conscious honesty of my convictions. I have a certain feeling, too, I will not deny, that if what I am about to say should be stifled and killed by an over-hasty judgment, it will yet rise again the third day. This feeling I have, not in exultation, it seems to me, not so

much in the shape of defiance, as in the shape of consolation, a soft whisper that lingers round me in my studies, to hold me firm, and smooth me into an even, uncaring spirit. Still, the best of all attitudes, I know, is this, — Let me do the right, and let God take care of me. I want to be in no better hands.

TO DR. BARTOL

HARTFORD, January 8, 1849.

My book is now in the hands of the printers, and I expect to see the last of the proof-sheets to-morrow. . . . My hope is not that it will convert anybody to me or my ways, but, what is dearer to me by far and more welcome, that it will start up inquiries of a different type, and lead to thought of a different character from those which have occupied the field of New England theology, and so to revisions, recastings, new affinities, more faith, and less dogma, and, above all, to a more catholic and fraternal spirit. I expect to be set upon all round the circle; and yet I have a confidence that a class of men who have heart enough to go into the æsthetic side of religion, and eyes to see something besides propositional wisdom, will admit that I have some truth in my representations. These, I think, will even wonder a little at the disturbance I have made by these expositions. . . .

One thing will be clear to many, — that I am a good deal more for a Theos than for a theology.

With a heart full of refreshing Christian remembrances, I am your brother,

H. BUSHNELL.

TO THE SAME

HARTFORD, February 13, 1849.

MY 'DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER, — I send you herewith the long forthcoming book. I have spoken somewhat freely of the Unitarians here and there, as I have of the orthodox. I hope they will not be any more angry with me than I expect the orthodox to be.

. . . I rejoice not a little in spirit to see the signs that are beginning to be unfolded of a new spiritual relation between our divided families. I see tokens of a mitigation of repugnance, and a more indulgent and fraternal charity, sometimes in quarters, too, where I should not look for it. I rejoice, too, in the fact that the Unitarian side in Boston are evincing just now signs of spiritual life that rebuke the dullness of orthodoxy. You remember, perhaps, that I expressed a conviction that the Unitarian side would ultimately take the lead of orthodoxy in spiritual vivacity and real piety of character. I am more and more confident of this, and nothing but this is wanted to silence all controversy and compel a fraternal state. Unitarians, however, will need, in order to this, to come off their moralistic, self-culturing method, cease to think of a character developed outwardly from their own centre, and pass over

by faith to live in God, which only is religion or Christianity. It is to be what God in Christ and God in the Spirit will make us, and what we cannot be in ourselves.

Your brother in Christ,

H. BUSHNELL.

TO THE SAME

HARTFORD, March 20, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — What you say regarding the untheologic character of my book, or its value as a “suggestive” instrument principally, exactly meets my feeling. It is what I wish to hear; for it is my very theory, you know, that nothing more is possible in the way of theology than to act suggestively. I have no doubt that some of the orthodox will say — it has been said to me privately, as you hint — that, protesting against logic, I have used it, and that, casting out dogmas, I have done it only to set up a dogma of my own. But it will be observed that I have used logic principally as a negative and distinctive instrument, and as *ad hominem* to the disciples of logic. And as to dogma, the point to which I have brought everything is this, and this, in my view, includes all I have done, viz., that God, in the matter of trinity and atonement, is seen to approach us or come into knowledge, not under terms of logic and notionally, but under the laws of expression. To this, trinity is brought down; to this, atonement. They meet us poeti-

cally, æsthetically, to pour their contents into us through feeling and imagination; to deposit their contents, not in our reason, but in our faith, — by faith to be experimented or known experimentally. . . . If any one chooses to call my doctrine *dogma*, and will call every right instrument of suggestion, or expression, even the last cry of Jesus, *dogma*, I have no objection.

## TO THE SAME

HARTFORD, April 11, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — I thank you for the only too undeserved compliment of your note in the "Inquirer," but more for the very beautiful, and in many points convincing, article you sent me in the "Examiner." There are passages in that article which I should like mightily to have written, and the whole spirit of it is such as to kindle a true Christian fire in my heart. If I must choose between it and the common view of orthodoxy, I should not long hesitate.

And yet there is a want in it, a vital defect of something. My heart cries, More, more! It leaves God too far off, interposing, between me and God, a creature-being, whom I want to worship more than him, and who really deserves my worship more than he; for surely it was more in him to die for me, a deeper love, than it was for the Father simply to let him. Just here, I perceive, is going to be the difficulty as regards that "reorganization" of which you speak. The tendency of

German speculations and reactions, you have seen (as in Ullman's article on the "Essence of Christianity"), is towards the "Incarnation," the union of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus, understanding that union in its highest sense. I am confident that Unitarianism and orthodoxy can never meet in any other point than this; partly, because the miraculous conception of Jesus, regarding him as a creature-being already *in esse*, is too awkward, too virtually impossible, for belief; more, because the religious want we have on our side is too vast to be answered by any means of so slender a quality. Nay, your human or creature Saviour is, in one view, an offense to us, because it justifies that frigid dictum of the logical judgment which asserts that God is too far off, too essentially incommunicable, to suffer a real union with humanity. I read your eloquent article, thrilled and melted by its presentations, offended or shocked by nothing, as I am by some of our orthodox teachings, scarcely dissenting anywhere, feeling that God's character is everywhere justified, and that I must offer myself to *communion* in the true brotherhood of the faith. And yet, when I had come to the end, said Amen to almost everything and closed the book, I was still obliged to say, Well, this is not enough; it does not fill me; my Saviour is more, closer, vaster, — God himself enshrined in this world-history with me to sanctify both it and me, and be in it and me, the fullness

of him that filleth all. It is only part of the same general defect, that you seem to be more shy of supernaturalism than I could wish, in the view you take of sacrifices, and especially in your view of *pardon*; for I hope it will some time or other be made to appear that there is a great deal more of supernaturalism in the management of this world than even orthodoxy has begun to suspect, — even a systematic, world-ruling, nature-redeeming supernaturalism; therefore, such as may aspire to separate sins (in pardon) from the damnation of mere nature, and the causative hell that nature contains or adds as a destiny to sin.

“The days of accusation,” to which Bushnell refers in the dedication of “Sermons for the New Life,” had fully come. A contemporary writer describes the situation:—

“At the time of the publication of ‘God in Christ,’ the atmosphere was sensitively tremulous with suspicions in respect to the orthodoxy of the author, a state of things of which he himself was not ignorant. On the issue of the book from the press in February, 1849, a few of the religious newspapers and magazines spoke of it tolerantly, one or two perhaps kindly, but the larger number with decided expressions of dissent and denunciation. The May number of the ‘New Englander’ for that year contained a notice of ‘God in Christ’ from the pen of Dr. Leonard Bacon, kindly in tone, and marked by discrimination and



fairness in the statement of its teachings. Two ministers residing in Hartford, afterwards abundantly friendly to Dr. Bushnell, published lengthy reviews, more or less dissenting from its statements of truth.

“But these criticisms, and others such as these, were the milk of human kindness itself, compared with the language employed by another class of writers. No sooner did the book see the light than it became apparent that the theological authorities were determined to strangle the infant in its very cradle. It was extensively believed, and publicly charged at the time, that the fierce and systematic onset which was made upon the author and his new work was the result of a concerted plan, originating in Hartford and its vicinity. As a part of this plan, the leading theological centres were to furnish each a champion to assist in crushing the man, who, though he had denied none of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, had ventured to express his faith in them under formulas and philosophic explanations somewhat different from those which were assumed to be canonically settled for all time.

“The first of these criticisms came from the Divinity School at New Haven. Under the caption, ‘What does Dr. Bushnell Mean?’ three articles, signed ‘Omicron,’ appeared in successive numbers of the ‘New York Evangelist.’ On their completion, these were gathered into a pamphlet of twenty-eight pages and extensively circulated.

In the course of a week or two, Princeton gave her weighty verdict, in an article of some forty pages, in the 'Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review.' This, though the most courteous and discriminating of all the reviews proceeding from centres of theologic authority, yet failed in many respects to represent fairly the teachings of the book, and pronounced upon its alleged errors with judicial severity. The next assault was made by the 'Christian Observatory,' a new religious monthly published in Boston, which devoted sixty pages of its issue for June to a criticism of 'God in Christ.' The tone of this review was bitter and severe to a degree almost unequalled in the history of modern controversial theology. About the same time, from Bangor Theological Seminary emanated a volume of one hundred and eighteen pages, entitled 'Review of Dr. Bushnell's God in Christ;' a book characterized by the calm and positively assured conviction that a well-settled theologic system is the one touchstone of all truth, and that the regions beyond are dangerous ground, not worth the exploring. The Theological Seminary at East Windsor furnished no formal review, but performed its full share in the attempted enterprise of extinguishing the new heresy by keeping up a running fire against it in the columns of the 'Religious Herald.'"

The controversy, if such it can be called, has special interest because it was probably the last of the kind that will be witnessed in New England.

Bushnell himself closed the era of such debates, not by settling the disputed questions, but by introducing a way of treating them which is not "under terms of logic, but under the laws of expression." Suggestion began to take the place of definition, and the verdicts of experience the place of dogma. He prepared the way for "Christian consciousness," at that time hardly a recognized factor in theology. Moreover, evolution has taken the cataclysmic feature out of criticism as out of all else, and has introduced instead a habit of regarding all things as in a process of becoming. Antagonism has given place to orderly phases, — each phase being a result and a cause. The polemic no longer has a vocation, or lingers like a chance survivor of an extinct species.

Bushnell prepared himself for the storm by a stout resolution not to be drawn into any reply "unless there is produced against me some argument of so great force that I feel myself required out of simple duty to the truth, either to surrender or to make important modifications in the views I have advanced," — a resolution that sounds strangely in connection with the fact that his most brilliant book in some respects is an aggressive and slashing defense, in which he surrenders and modifies far less than he reiterates and asserts. Still, the resolution indicates, even if it was not kept, a mind that played in a higher field than that of dialectic combat.

But the situation was not without humor. In

a letter to Rev. Henry Goodwin, one of his earliest and ablest defenders, he wrote: "Have you read the long review in 'The Princeton'? You have seen me a pantheist in 'The Evangelist.' Why not an atheist as well, with a special incarnation and a plan of supernatural redemption? This would enlighten the Germans!" Rev. Mr. Chesebrough had noticed the discrepancies between the reviewers; and inasmuch as the leading attack was headed with the question, "What does Dr. Bushnell mean?" Mr. Chesebrough, in a series of letters to the "Religious Herald," raised the question, "Do they understand him?" These letters, written under the signature C. C. (Criticus Criticorum), formed a unique and effective piece of criticism. His method was that of placing quotations from the critics in parallel columns. It had been claimed in the "Religious Herald" that they concurred in their understanding of the book. The parallel quotations showed violent contradiction, both by assigning to Bushnell different opinions on the same subject, and by indicating conflicting beliefs and opinions among the writers themselves. He is accused not only of all the heresies from the Docetæ down, but of those that exclude each other. But this is not more marked than the disagreement among themselves on the points under consideration. New Haven and Princeton and Bangor flatly contradict one another on the trinity and atonement; Professor Goodrich contends for a view of the person of Christ which

Dr. Hodge declares was never heard of, and all are at sea as to Sabellianism and the Logos. It was also strange to see Dr. Hodge of Princeton holding a view of the trinity more nearly in accord with that of Bushnell than that put forth by such New England divines as Adams, Albro, Edwards, Beecher, Kirk, McClure, Stearns, and Thompson in the "Christian Observatory." We may remark in passing that the close contact of these ministers with Unitarianism, for all lived in or near Boston, is the explanation of their strenuous orthodoxy, which, in turn, is the explanation of Unitarianism. It is not rash to say that had these eminent divines tolerated Bushnell's semi-Sabellianism even to the extent to which Dr. Hodge of Princeton tolerated it, a schism that never ought to have existed might have been in a great measure healed. Who, for example, could object to the following statement, unless he has retreated from the church into pure theism with its impenetrable mystery? "Neither is it any so great wisdom, as many theologians appear to fancy, to object to the word *person*. . . . We only need to abstain from assigning to these divine persons an interior, metaphysical nature, which we are no wise able to investigate, or which we may positively know to contradict the real unity of God." (God in Christ, p. 174.) To this Dr. Hodge says "Amen," and adds: "What Trinitarian wishes more, or can say more, than Dr. Bushnell says here?" (Princeton Review, pp. 260, 261.)

We do not mean to intimate that the Unitarians of that day or of this would have been satisfied with Bushnell's doctrine of the trinity, but only that, had his view been tolerated, they would have felt relief from the tritheism which so troubled them.

The movement had in view a trial before the Consociation, a body that needs to be described in order to be understood by the general reader. In 1708 the Saybrook Synod made a statement of doctrine known as the Saybrook Platform, which provided that the churches should be grouped in Consociations or Standing Councils, generally one in each county. The Consociation was not only a Standing Council, but a court for considering and deciding all cases of discipline not easily settled by the local church. Its decisions were final, though another Consociation might be called into the case. It was in substance Presbyterianism. The ministers, at the same time, were divided into Associations for consultation, and for licensing candidates for the ministry, but the Consociation had charge of all strictly ecclesiastical affairs.<sup>1</sup> As it was Presbyterian in form, so it came to represent the more conservative side in theology, espe-

<sup>1</sup> See *History of Congregational Churches*, by Professor Williston Walker, p. 206; also *An Historical Address*, by Rev. E. P. Parker, D. D., on "The Hartford Central Association and the Bushnell Controversy,"—a contribution of permanent value to the history of Congregationalism in Connecticut, and the fullest account of the efforts to bring Bushnell to trial. (Printed in Hartford, 1896.)

cially when, under the teaching of New Haven, the lines were closely drawn between the Old and New Schools. Bushnell could not be brought before the Consociation until he had been presented for trial by his Association. The first step in this direction was taken June 5, 1849, by the appointment of a committee "to examine the book in question, and confer with Brother Bushnell, and report at an adjourned meeting of this body whether he have, in fact, published views fundamentally erroneous."

Two reports were presented; that of the majority said: —

"We are satisfied that whatever errors the book may contain, it furnishes no sufficient ground for instituting a judicial process with him. We regret his departure, in some of his statements, from the formulas of the church. We adhere to these formulas; but we regard him, notwithstanding the exceptions he has taken to them, as holding whatever is essential to the scheme of doctrine which they embody.

"He could not, in our view, be properly or justly subjected to the charge of heresy and a consequent trial, or be denied the confidence of his brethren."

A minority report declared that the book in question contains fundamental errors, justly subjecting the author to the charge of heresy.

At a later meeting of the Association the majority report was adopted by a vote of seventeen to

three. This practical unanimity rendered it improbable that the Consociation could ever bring Bushnell to trial; but the question was at last settled by the spontaneous withdrawal of the church of which he was pastor from that body. Meanwhile another Association, the Fairfield West, undertook to secure action in the General Association, but failed on the ground that only district Associations can institute discipline in cases of error among their members. Under the Congregational system trial for heresy is a self-limiting disease. Foiled in this direction, it next addressed (January, 1850) a "Remonstrance and Complaint" to the Hartford Central against its acquittal, and urged a reconsideration. This it declined to do, but protested against the conclusion that it gave its sanction to any peculiarity of Dr. Bushnell's scheme of doctrine. Its position was simply that of toleration. The Fairfield West then addressed a letter to each district Association, except the Hartford Central, urging them to meet and consider the subject, and asserting that Dr. Bushnell had "denied nearly all that is precious in the Gospel of Christ." Nothing was done until the meeting of the General Association in Litchfield, June, 1850, when the following result was reached on a motion made by Dr. Bushnell himself:—

"*Voted*, That we regard it as the duty of any Association receiving such a remonstrance to reconsider the case in question, and, if they do not reverse their former action, to use their best en-



deavors to satisfy the complaining Association in respect to their proceedings so complained of."

The Association did not see fit to "revise its former action," and the effort to bring Bushnell before the General Association for trial came to naught. It did not fail for lack of persistence, but chiefly because Congregationalism does not readily lend itself to trials of any sort; it is a spiritual rather than an ecclesiastical system. The result was also due to Bushnell's own management, which was both adroit and honorable. He recognized his accountability to his Association, and by his resolution placed himself once more in its hands. A main element in the case was the fact that his brethren, little as they agreed with his views, could not bring themselves to believe them heretical in substance. Moreover, New Haven, which had sent out one of the most severe but least weighty attacks, had itself so long been under charges of heresy that the cry had lost something of its force. Half of the clergy had been pronounced heretical by the other half. That men accused of heresy in regard to decrees and atonement should join hands with their accusers in condemning views involving a definition of the trinity accorded neither with human nature nor common sense. The atmosphere of Connecticut has always been favorable to freedom both in State and Church. Its theologians, a long list, were men of progress, and the direction was that of sympathy with the unfolding of society and with

the humanity of its civil institutions. It had sustained Dwight and Taylor, and it was reluctant to place the stamp of rejection upon a son whom it had bred to thought and courage. The victory won at this stage had but slight theological significance. Only a few agreed with the opinions in question; the victory was of a higher order, — a triumph of toleration and charity.

A quotation from Dr. Bacon's article in the "New Englander," September, 1879, p. 701, is in place: —

"It was with much more than ordinary interest that a large assembly of clergy and intelligent laity listened to the 'Concio' in 1848. . . . Nobody who heard that sermon could say that the preacher was a Unitarian. Yet there was room to ask: Is he orthodox? Is he not chargeable with dangerous tendencies? . . . By this time it had become evident that Dr. Bushnell was not a Unitarian. But what was he, and what was to be done with him? Here was a strong man, driving the ploughshare deep into the subsoil of theology; and who could tell what would spring up in such furrows? . . . Could he be refuted? Certainly. Nothing was easier than to refute him by the ordinary methods of theological controversy. Make him responsible for all possible inferences from his language, call him by hard names fished up out of the chaos of post-Nicene and ante-Nicene controversies, prove him guilty of dangerous complicity with Monothelite, Monophysite, Patripas-

sian, and Sabellian errors; and would not the refutation be complete?"

The peace thus won did not last long, and it must be said that the cause did not lie wholly on the side of the accusers. Bushnell had made an elaborate defense before his Association, and he had also read extensively on the subjects under debate. The outcome was another volume on the same subject under the title, "Christ in Theology," a book now out of print.

In the preface he disclaims a controversial purpose, or even defense of his doctrine, but his intention is rather to make "a fuller exposition of certain points." The following quotation reads like a caricature of the theological situation, but it was not only true, but an explanation in part of Bushnell's career as a theologian. It was to escape from this dialectic trifling that he turned aside in search of simpler and more natural interpretations of a gospel that was revealed in the terms of human life.

"As my former volume was called 'God in Christ,' I have called the present 'Christ in Theology,' with a design that will be sufficiently obvious. To complete the descending series begun, there is wanted another volume, showing the still lower, and, as it were, sedimentary subsidence of theology itself, precipitated in the confused mixtures of its elements; a volume that shall do upon the whole body of theological opinion in New England what my anonymous friend C. C. has done

with such fatal effect upon the particular strictures of my adversaries. To see brought up in distinct array before us the multitudes of leaders, and schools, and theologic wars of only the century past, — the Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians; the Arminianizers and the true Calvinists; the Pelagians and Augustinians; the Tasters and the Exercisers; Exercisers by divine efficiency and by human self-efficiency; the love-to-being-in-general virtue, the willing-to-be-damned virtue, and the love-to-one's-greatest-happiness virtue; no ability, all ability, and moral and natural ability distinguished; disciples by the new-creating act of Omnipotence, and by change of the governing purpose; atonement by punishment and by expression; limited and general; by imputation and without imputation; trinitarians of a threefold distinction, of three psychologic persons, or of three sets of attributes; under a unity of oneness, or of necessary agreement, or of society and deliberative council: nothing, I think, would more certainly disenchant us of our confidence in systematic orthodoxy, and the possibility in human language of an exact theologic science, than an exposition so practical and serious, and withal so indisputably mournful, — so mournfully indisputable." (Preface to *Christ in Theology*.)

This volume is one of the most eloquent and interesting produced by Bushnell. While disclaiming controversy, it is filled with the fire of battle. Personal antagonists are transfixed by his

pen, not from malice, but for necessary illustration of his subject. He does not loiter, as often was the case, loath to leave his thought, but rushes on, — brilliant, sententious, epigrammatic, and always with a splendid sense of strength and vitality. The memory of recent experiences runs along the pages, so that while he is more careful in statement at some points, he is more audacious in others. In no other work is there so much evidence of wide reading, — enough at least to exclude the reproach of imperfect scholarship. Still the book illustrates a peculiarity, and, it must be confessed, a weakness of Bushnell if regarded as a professional theologian ; he not only wrote, but published first, and read later, with the result of a real or apparent modification of his opinions. The semi-Sabellianism with which he started yields somewhat, and the trinity becomes more than a method of revelation. Fearing he had left the door open to pantheism, he reëxamines the Nicene Creed, and is led to confess that he “ had not sufficiently conceived its import.” While there is a movement of his mind towards an immanent trinity, he stops short, predicating that “ in some high sense indefinable, He is datelessly and eternally becoming three ” in order to come within finite apprehension. If here there is an acknowledgment of the immanence of the trinity, it is so related to revelation that a way is left open for retreat into the law of expression as contained in his theory of language. That he so retreated,

there is no doubt. "Let us stay in the simple Three of revelation, receiving them, not as addressed to our scientific instincts, but under the simple conditions of expression" (p. 120).

Whatever his approaches to the Nicene statement, he never fully reached it. If one cares to classify Bushnell, it would be as ante rather than post Nicene, but neither would signify much. He does not belong to early theology, either heretical or orthodox. All through, in his writings and in his life, he forces upon us the conclusion that there were a few general truths which he held half intuitively and wholly by reflection, from which he never substantially departed. His mind was of the intuitive order, and his strength lay there. He is best seen and most fairly judged by his simple and large contentions, and not by his refinements upon them. These primitive, spontaneous assertions made him a modern man; his explanations put him back among those spinners of theology whose company he had forsaken at the outset; try as he might, he could not make himself at home among them. He belonged half to the mystics and half to science, and wholly to himself. What he felt he trusted, and what he saw he knew. When he speculated he became uncertain, and finally gravitated back to his first positions. His apparent and almost formal denial of the real humanity of Christ was due to his overwhelming sense of God, who seemed to him to have simply used humanity for reaching it. But he recognized a suffering

humanity in God, and Christ as the expression of that humanity. Under such conceptions, dispute over the subject becomes almost a logomachy. The oneness of God and humanity is fully implied. When Bushnell undertook to follow his keen and relentless critics, it was as though Tennyson had been betrayed into a defense of "In Memoriam." All efforts to square his doctrine of the trinity with historic orthodoxy are needless; we no longer think under such a restriction. The defect of his treatment lay in his approach to the doctrine. If he had at first fully grasped the humanity of Christ, and by it had ascended to a conception of God, he would have interpreted the doctrine in a way not only more in accord with Christ's own growing consciousness of his relation to the Father, but also in better accord with the present conception of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

Bushnell was always hovering about this conception, but his Sabellian bias obscured it.<sup>2</sup>

Bushnell's discovery of his substantial agree-

<sup>1</sup> Among the six principles on which F. W. Robertson taught, the fourth is: "That belief in the human character of Christ's humanity must be antecedent to belief in his divine origin." (*Life*, vol. ii. p. 160.) Elsewhere (p. 169) he says: "Son of God because Son of Man. . . . Only through man can God be known; only through a perfect man, perfectly revealed." Again: "Perfectly human, therefore divine."

<sup>2</sup> It may interest the reader to know the exact form in which Bushnell accepted the Nicene Creed; and as the book *Christ in Theology* is becoming rare, we quote from it (p. 178):—

"The Nicene Creed, taking Athanasius for its interpreter, assumes for its point of departure, and a point that must not be moved, the unity and strict simplicity of God: It hinges on the

ment with the Nicene Creed was a satisfaction to him, not so much because it established his own orthodoxy, as that it revealed the heresy, not only of his critics, but of the entire New England School, if tested by the Nicene Creed, as will be seen from the following quotation (p. 186): "By this careful examination of the Nicene Council, which is the fountain of Church doctrine as regards this particular subject of trinity, you have discovered, I think, that our New England doctrine has little to say of orthodoxy; having itself cast away precisely that on which the Church doctrine hangs, namely, the eternal generation and procession, and affirmed precisely that which the Church doctrine denies, namely, a threefold substance in the divine nature. And, as to myself, while I have

word *homoousios*, commonly translated 'one substance,' or 'same in substance.' And so rigidly is this held that the Word, or Son, whatever conception of his personality may be offered in the Scripture, is yet declared to be 'proper to the substance of the Father' and not another substance. Arius had affirmed that the Son was 'made' or 'created' by the Father; that He was 'of the will' of the Father, existing without or exterior to the Father. Against Him it affirms that He is 'of the substance' of the Father, or, as Athanasius declares again and again (*Library of the Fathers*, pp. 232-264) 'proper to the substance of the Father,' — not created, not of the will, not exterior." Farther on he so defines the phrase "begotten not made" as to embrace it under the Logos idea, the "begotten" being an eternal process, and, like the radiance of light, constant and coterminous with it. On page 184, speaking of the Council, while he "disowns all their supposed knowledge of God . . . concerning his internal mode of life and active being," he claims that "they assert the active and strict unity of God, deny a trinity in the divine essence, discover a trinity grounded in act as distinct from essence, and draw from the Scripture the same conception of the Word or Logos."



as little care as possible to secure a shelter under any form of orthodoxy, it is, I confess, a most refreshing surprise to me to find that I can so heartily approve the general truth of what I supposed I had rejected; and that I can welcome, with a respect so genuine, the fathers of a remote age, who had lost their hold of our reverence, simply because we had lost our hold of their meaning."

It may occur to some who read this passage that Bushnell epitomized in his own thought on the trinity the history of the doctrine up to, and inclusive of, the Council. It is unfair, however, to transfer his thought to that age and label it with its terms, Sabellian, Arian, or Athanasian. The *mutatis mutandis* can hardly be accomplished, so completely does his thought belong to himself and to his own day.



## **CHAPTER X**

**LETTERS ON "GOD IN CHRIST," AND "CHRIST  
IN THEOLOGY"**

“Thus, again, man is born of Nature into a higher nature. He therefore alone is possessed of two natures, — a lower, in common with animals, and a higher, peculiar to himself. The whole mission and life-work of man is the progressive and finally the complete dominance, both in the individual and in the race, of the higher over the lower. The whole meaning of sin is the humiliating bondage of the higher to the lower. As the material evolution of Nature found its goal, its completion, and its significance in the ideal man — the divine man; as spirit, unconscious in the womb of Nature, continued to develop by necessary law until it came to birth and independent life in man, so the new-born spirit of man, both in the individual and in the race, must ever strive by freer law to attain, through a newer birth, unto a higher life.” — JOSEPH LE CONTE, *Evolution and its Relation to Religious Thought*, p. 307.

## CHAPTER X

### LETTERS ON "GOD IN CHRIST," AND "CHRIST IN THEOLOGY"

THE personal life of Dr. Bushnell while he was engaged in the preparation and defense of "God in Christ" must not be passed by. The glimpses of him at this time, few but revealing, are gained chiefly from his letters and from the written accounts of his friends. His prolific and self-contained mind is seen in the easy production of the two volumes, and his patience under the storm they raised about him. It was at this time that he gave his address at Cambridge on "Work and Play," and also that on "The Founders Great in their Unconsciousness" before the New England Society of New York. These addresses, prepared while his professional life was in jeopardy, revealed the sources of his power. Work may become play or a sort of music of the soul by the free activity of the spirit seeking to express itself; and life may resolve itself into poetry as "the real and true state of man." One who thought in this way could not be greatly vexed by accusations of heresy; or if they troubled him, he found another refuge in the Puritan spirit and in the companionship of

the Founders of the State and the Church to which he belonged. During this period he also made a notable address before the Legislature of the State, which he named, with his usual skill, a "Historical Estimate." It was a careful review of the history of Connecticut, calling attention to what was most noble in its history, and explaining or softening what seemed otherwise. It was written at the very time when the Fairfield West Association was most busy in its preparations for bringing him before the next General Association. During this time, also, he produced "The Age of Homespun" and his discourse on "Religious Music," which was delivered before the Beethoven Society of Yale College, at the opening of a new organ, — the first used in the college, — an original and distinct contribution to the subject, and as remote in its spirit from his immediate circumstances as a symphony from the grinding of a mill; it was like a hymn out of chaos. Bushnell was not indifferent to his ecclesiastical standing, and he regarded the whole matter as one to be treated with dignity and seriousness, but he did not sink himself in it, nor suffer it to worry him beyond what was inevitable. If it had any effect upon him intellectually, it was to add keenness and vigor to his work in other directions. A quotation from Dr. Leonard Bacon, bearing on the two recently published books, is inserted here, though written a quarter of a century after their publication. It has weight as coming from a man of great ability, who watched the entire career of Bushnell

with the keen eye of a critic, and yet with a breadth of sympathy that revealed his own largeness of nature.

“My reëxamination of those two volumes, not often consulted since I first read them, more than a quarter of a century ago, and my recollections of the theological and ecclesiastical disturbance of which they were the occasion, have given me a new perception of their value as a contribution, not to theology only, but also to the advancement of religion. Freely and thankfully acknowledging their effect on myself, I cannot doubt that they have had a similar effect, though not always the same, on other minds. As their author called no man Master, so he founded no special school party, and has left behind him no disciples that call themselves or are called by his name. But, what is better, his influence embodied in those volumes has contributed much to make our New England theology — let me rather say, all the evangelical theology of our English tongue — less rigidly scholastic, more scriptural, broader in its views, more inspiring in its relations to the pulpit and to the Christian life. The one theme on which dissent from his doctrine has been loudest and most persistent is the work of Christ, the atonement. Yet on that theme he has been an efficient teacher, even of many who protest against his teachings. If, in their understanding of him, he has too little regarded those illustrations of the atonement which theologians, and especially our New England theo-

logians, have drawn from the nature of a moral government, he has nevertheless taught even the most scholastic and logical expositors that the saving work for which He who was at once the Son of God and the Son of Man came into our human world and lived and died, is a theme too large, too transcendent in its relations to the infinite and the eternal, to be illustrated by any one analogy, or to be comprehended and carried about in any formula. It is increasingly characteristic of Christian thought in these last years of our century that the evangelical churches are turning from dogmas about Christ to Christ himself, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." <sup>1</sup>

The following letter is inserted, not only because it states Bushnell's feeling and position on the question, but that of the vast majority of the Congregational clergymen of New England. Those not sharing in it were apt to be found in the ranks of extreme conservatism in theology.

TO DR. BARTOL

HARTFORD, May 6, 1851.

. . . Is it not a hard thing we have to do in these times, not to break out in a little excess? For one, I confess that I want, about half the time, to do something that will require to be pardoned; and I verily believe that I should, if I were not drawn more and more towards the conviction that

<sup>1</sup> *New Englander*, September, 1879, p. 710.



the renovating power of true Christianity is the principal hope of man; and more and more deeply impressed with a conviction of the impotence of all attacks on sin, that take the line of morality or mere external reform. As it is, I must and will say, as I have opportunity, that there are things required in this abominable Fugitive Slave Law that I will not do, — no, not even to save the Union. I could cheerfully die to save it; but chase a fugitive or withhold my sympathy and aid from a fugitive from slavery! — may God grant me grace never to do the damning sin of such obedience! Nay, I will go farther. The first duty that I owe to civil government is to violate and spurn such a law, that is, in the points alluded to. . . .

TO THE REV. HENRY GOODWIN<sup>1</sup>

May 26, 1851.

I begin to think of giving myself wholly to the more practical side of religion, and to practical duty and work. I seem to be now very much cut off from access to the public; not so, I trust, from access to God. God is left, and He is the best public to me, the only public in which I have any

<sup>1</sup> To no one was Bushnell under greater obligation at this crisis than to Dr. Goodwin, excepting Dr. Porter, of Farmington, and Mr. Chesebrough (*Criticus Criticorum*). Dr. Goodwin, soon after, took a professorship at Olivet College, and became well known by his writings, and still more by the beauty of his character. He was in himself a true representative, as he was the ablest defender, of Bushnell's theology.

satisfaction ; and I think with the highest delight of going apart with Him into a desert place to rest awhile. No, not to rest, but only to get away from noise, and live in the silence of love and duty. I long inexpressibly, for the rest of my life, to be wholly immersed in this better element ; and it is my daily prayer that God will give me this best and most to be desired of all gifts, the gift of a private benefit to be seen in the usefulness of my ministry to my own flock. These know me and love me, and I pray that God will enable me to lead them into his green pastures.

TO DR. BARTOL

September 8, 1851.

My own position, as you will understand, is now sufficiently settled. I do not say that I have converted my ministerial friends to my heresies, or any number of them. But the younger very generally give me their sympathy and stand by me, resolved that nothing shall be done against me. And that is all I want. If I can have my position unmolested, it is all I can ask.

Nothing is more beautiful, I sometimes think, than to watch the working of men's opinions, especially here in New England, just at this time that is passing. The motion clearly is all in one direction, slow, silent, quite undiscovered by many, but still regular and sure. My hope is that this convergence will in due time issue in a grand catholic coalescence, a new and better type of

evangelism, possible to be developed nowhere else, and a necessary condition of the universal triumph of Christianity. Let us wait, watch, work, and take courage.

The following note was written to Mr. Chesebrough, who seems to have asked him to frame a creed : —

HARTFORD, December 24, 1851.

I write a few words from the bookstore just to answer your note. I cannot undertake to write a creed ; I have too much else on my hands. I will barely suggest what I have often thought of, — no creed save what is contained in the covenant where the faith *works* (such, for example, as our Church Covenant, which I send you), with perhaps something wrought into it, to recognize a little more directly depravity and regeneration.

This, you know, was the Puritan Fathers' method, — no creed, but a covenant.

The difficulties in the way of bringing Bushnell to trial and the stout support he received in his Association and throughout the State against unfair and illegal treatment did not indicate his real standing among his brethren. They would not permit him to be treated unjustly, but the majority went no further. For years in his own city, pulpit exchanges and coöperation in church work were withheld. The College Chapel and the churches in New Haven were, however, open to him, and

he was in demand everywhere for stated occasions. Dr. Hawes of the Centre Church in Hartford allowed his opposition to pass into a personal animosity that continued for years, fed, perhaps, by rumors of good-natured raillery from Bushnell that did not fail to reach his ears. Bushnell bore this aggressive disfellowship with patience, and strove at times to overcome it in one way or another, but without success until the era of general peace arrived.

In the winter of 1852 he delivered a course of lectures on the Supernatural, one of which he gave as the Dudleian lecture at Cambridge in May. Meanwhile the Fairfield West Association, moved by the second book, "Christ in Theology," renewed its efforts to bring him to trial, in the shape of an appeal to the ministers of the State. Dr. E. P. Parker refers to it as follows: —

"This formidable document reviews all proceedings up to date, and contains several papers not elsewhere now obtainable. It contains elaborate and painful criticisms of Dr. Bushnell's books; points out the barrier in the way of his prosecution for heresy; wants to know if there is not some way of securing, not only his condemnation, but also that of the Association which has publicly shielded and countenanced his heresies; and announces that Fairfield West will send delegates to the next General Association, instructed to present to that body suitable questions on that subject."

It met with "a solemn protest" in the body where it originated, yet it was sent to all the ministers in the State, and not without effect. Bushnell presented to the annual meeting in 1852 a remonstrance against any action being taken in his case, indignantly charging that it would convert "a body of fraternal conference" into a "vigilance committee." Nothing came of the proposed action except two resolutions, which virtually dismissed it from the General Association as having no place there, and remanded the complainants and all concerned to "our ecclesiastical rules."

"At the next General Association, at Danbury, June, 1852, Fairfield West's delegates appeared with their questions and requests. The Protest by Dr. Linsley, signed by *nine* members of Fairfield West, was circulated with marked effect. Dr. Bushnell sent an earnest remonstrance against any action of interference in the case, saying, however, that he hoped the brethren would not imagine that he was at all anxious for the result."<sup>1</sup>

Only one way remained by which Bushnell could be reached, namely, through the Consociation. To this end it was necessary that he should be presented for trial by three members of his church, together with a certificate from the pastor of another church. No one could be found to do this, but in order to prevent possible trouble in this direction, the church unanimously voted to

<sup>1</sup> Rev. E. P. Parker, D. D., *The Hartford Central Association and the Bushnell Controversy*.

withdraw from the Consociation. That an adverse verdict could have been secured even then was highly improbable, but the church had no mind for the conflict. Separation from the Consociation did not end the efforts of his accusers to bring him to trial, but it narrowed the field of battle to a straight conflict between the complaining Association and the General Association, where, later on, victory was won in the form of a refusal to present him for trial. It was, however, an ecclesiastical, not a doctrinal vindication. It reflected the catholicity of the Congregational churches of Connecticut, but it did not indicate agreement with Bushnell's views of the trinity and the atonement. His feeling in regard to this very important action of his church is shown in the following letters:—

TO THE REV. A. S. CHESEBROUGH

HARTFORD, July 6, 1852.

I can hardly tell you how good it is to hear some one speak as a friend, that is, in the full, unqualified assent of confidence and sympathy. I have a great many who call themselves friends, and who would be hurt if I were to call them by any other name; I believe they respect me, and mean to have justice done me; but they have a great many qualifications, some that are qualifications of prudence, and have reference to the saving of themselves from unnecessary reproach, and some that are really required by the partial coin-

cidence they have with my sentiments. But there are only a few, God bless them, who have been ready to give me their open, unrestricted sympathy, as you have done, and in your letter, despite the rather frowning aspect of my affairs, continue to do. I hardly know whether my "martyrdom" is at hand, as you suggest, or not. I did begin to think it might be so; but the more I turn the matter about, the less do I see how the fire is going to be kindled. There is really no way left of coming at me now, unless they attack my church first, in the matter of their withdrawal, denying their right and making it an act of revolution, which I think will be a rather unpopular undertaking. I was a good deal in doubt about this step; but while I was deliberating, the matter was taken out of my hands, and I consented to let it be so. I wish you could have been at the meeting of the church. It was a beautiful sight, all in just the temper of calmness and decision that I could wish. And now the more I look at the matter, the more I seem to see that it was of God. Let us wait in God and see.

TO DR. BARTOL

HARTFORD, July 19, 1852.

I am glad to know that my position in reference to my ecclesiastical adversaries satisfies you. It is even the more welcome to know that my friends whom I most respect approve it, that I think it is approved by God. This, at least,

has been my first and principal study, and I feel the more confident that I have his sanction, that good and right-seeing minds are able to yield me theirs. The step recently taken by my church is theirs, not mine, though I suppose I could have kept them from it still, as I have done for the past two years, if I had seen fit to exert myself in that way. There was no need of such a step, because of any danger that threatened me, in case of a trial before the Consociation. I should have carried my point, but it would have cost a whole year's struggle; the trial would have been a farce, — not a trial, but only a polling of votes already fixed, for the most part; and then my adversaries would not have been able to sit down under their defeat any the more quietly. Therefore, I concluded that the better way was to be off, and throw myself on my character at once. What now is to come I do not know, — something, doubtless; the agitation will go on in some new shape; it cannot rest.

The heavy labors of the pulpit, book-making, lecturing, and, above all, the tax on his nervous system induced by his ecclesiastical experiences, began to make serious inroads on his health. Partial prostration and a slight hemorrhage showed that the crisis of his strong life had come. But the slow dissolving of the tabernacle revealed his natural strength, and the wonder is that he did not succumb earlier, and that he lasted so long.



A visit to Newport in August and to Saratoga in September brought no sensible improvement.

In October, his health not having improved, a longer rest was deemed necessary, and he started on a trip to the West in company with friends. It was hard to leave his work, but he confessed that "when his knuckles were rapped so hard, he had no choice but to let go." He spent the first Sunday in Oberlin with Dr. Finney, — "a most happy and blessed day." The two men were unlike, but on one or two points they were in sympathy, and each felt the greatness of the other. Both also were enduring the fires of persecution, — one for being over-good and the other not good enough, but in each case on theological grounds. At a later date he wrote of Finney: —

"I know not how it is, but I feel greatly drawn to this man, despite the greatest dissimilarity of tastes, and a method of soul, whether in thought or feeling, wholly unlike. I said I knew not how, but I do know. It is because I find God with him, and consciously receive nothing but good and genuine (he would say honest) impressions from him."

After a wearisome journey to Minnesota, then supposed to be a region favorable to weakened lungs, he returned by way of Galena, St. Louis, and Niagara, which he visited for the third time and with fresh impressions: —

"It is so great in itself, and magnifies so wonderfully the revelation of its grandeur, that it

finally conquers, and compels us at last to say, 'There is nothing like it, nothing of magnificence to class with it.' The more bald it is in the matter of surroundings, the more magnificent, the better we like it. Oh, this pouring on, on, on, — exhaustless, ceaseless, like the counsel itself of God, — one ocean plunging in solemn repose of continuity into another; the breadth, the height, the volume, the absence of all fluster, as when the floods lift up their waves; the self-confidence of the preparation, as grand in the night when no eye sees it as in the day; still bending itself downward to the plunge, as a power that is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; wanting no margin of attractions to complement the scene it makes; making, in fact, no scene, but doing a *deed* which is enough to do, whether it is seen or not! Verily, my soul reveled within me to-day, as never since I was a conscious being, in the contemplation of this tremendous type of God's eternity and majesty. I could hardly stand, such was the sense it gave me of the greatness of God."

In the same letter are a few lines that not only sum up his religious experience, but explain his theology as well as anything we have. The conception of God here stated shows why he fell into his semi-Sabellian view of the trinity, and why, "blinded by excess of light," he failed to see the absolute humanity of Christ — seeing only a reflection of the face of God in him. Bushnell was the broadest man of his day, but he was still mastered

by one idea ; it held him like a passion, and drove out everything that even seemed to detract from it. Novalis' phrase, "God-intoxicated," applies to him as clearly as it did to Spinoza. But what he seemed to withhold from the external order he transferred to God, where it became a perfect reality. Hence his patripassianism ; Bushnell was not a pantheist, but he was pantheistic.

"How little do we know as yet, my dearest earthly friend, of what is contained in the word *God* ! We put on great magnifiers in the form of adjectives, and they are true ; but the measures they ascribe, certified by the judgment, are not realized, or only dimly realized, in our experience. I see this proved to me, now and then, by the capacity I have to think and feel greater things concerning God. It is as if my soul were shut in within a vast orb made up of concentric shells of brass or iron. I could hear, even when I was a child, the faint ring of a stroke on the one that is outmost and largest of them all ; but I began to break through one shell after another, bursting every time into a kind of new, and wondrous, and vastly enlarged heaven, hearing no more the dull, close ring of the nearest casement, but the ring, as it were, of concave firmaments and third heavens set with stars ; till now, so gloriously has my experience of God opened his greatness to me, I seem to have gotten quite beyond all physical images and measures, even those of astronomy, and simply to think *God* is to find and bring into my feeling

more than even the imagination can reach. I bless God that it is so. I am cheered by it, encouraged, sent onward, and, in what He gives me, begin to have some very faint impression of the glory yet to be revealed."

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **PASTORAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL EXPERIENCES**

“Two things have set the church on fire and been the plagues of it above one thousand years : 1. Enlarging our creed, and making more fundamentals than ever God made.

“2. Composing, and so imposing, our creeds and confessions in our own words and phrases.

“When men have learned more manners and humility than to accuse God’s language as too general and obscure, as if they could mend it, and have more dread of God, and compassion on themselves, than to make those to be fundamentals or certainties which God never made so ; and when they reduce their confessions, 1. to their due extent, and 2. to scripture phrase, that dissenters may not scruple subscribing, then, and, I think, never till then, shall the church have peace about doctrinals. It seems to me no heinous Socinian motion which Chillingworth is blamed for, viz., Let all men believe the Scripture, and that only, and endeavor to believe it in the true sense, and promise this, and require no more of others ; and they shall find this not only better, but the only means to suppress heresy and restore unity.”

— RICHARD BAXTER’S *Works*, vol. xxii. p. 236.

## CHAPTER XI

### PASTORAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL EXPERIENCES

IN 1853 Bushnell preached a commemorative sermon, in which he reviewed his ministry of twenty years. Like all great preachers, he usually refrained from allusion to himself in the pulpit. His sermons were immensely charged with personal experience, but it was not put in a personal form. This is the more significant in view of the fact that the accusations made against him were calculated to disturb his relations to his people; but he would not use his pulpit for personal defense. For the most part, and in all the larger relations of life, his fine sense of propriety was seldom overborne by provocation, or by opportunities to strengthen his own side of the question. He made few apologies and asked no favors. But a pastorate of twenty years justified and even called for a review, and he took occasion to unbosom himself, not so much for defense, as to acknowledge the affection and confidence of his people.

The publication of his books — each more heretical than the previous one — had left him but a small following among his clerical brethren, but his church stood by him from first to last with full-hearted allegiance. In this sermon, parts of

which have been quoted in previous chapters, he takes his people into his confidence, rehearses the stages of his mental history as he passed "into the vein of comprehensiveness," tells them why he preached on slavery and other political questions, and why he wrote "Christian Nurture" and "God in Christ" and "Christ in Theology." Of the last two volumes he spoke as follows:—

"Regretting some things which I had heretofore published, not as unjust to others, but as too violent in the manner to be just to myself and the meekness of the Christian spirit, I had determined, from the first, to have no controversy over these discourses, — a determination to which I have resolutely adhered, though perceiving, every day, the advantage taken of my silence. A considerable time after the investigation instituted by my brethren, I concluded that it might be my duty to my friends and the churches, as a contribution for the sake of peace, and not for controversy, to publish the substance of my argument before the Association, which I did in a second volume. And the final result of the whole matter in issue, I think, may be discovered in the fact that, instead of the whole bushel of attacks on my first volume which I gathered up a few days ago, no one article of review or hostile criticism has ever to this hour been published against a volume quite as heretical as the first, more adequately stated, and confirmed in every point by appeal to the accepted standards of the church. . . .



“You have been immovable and true in your fidelity to me. . . . You have never been a cap-tious people. It is a long time since I have heard any complaint of my preaching but two : one, that I preach too long sermons, which is sometimes true ; and the other, that I preach Christ too much, which I cannot think is a fault to be repented of ; for Christ is all, and beside him there is no gospel to be preached or received. . . .

“I wish it were possible, also, to speak of the way in which God has led me on out of the difficulties and reserved questions which encompassed my early ministry. I will only say that Christianity is opened to me now as a new heaven of truth, a supernatural heaven, wide as the firmament, possible only to faith, to that luminous, clear, and glorious. This one thing I have found, that it is not in man to think out a gospel, or to make a state of light by phosphorescence at his own centre. He can have the great mystery of godliness only as it is mirrored in his heart by an inward revelation of Christ. Do the will and you shall know the doctrine,— this is the truth I have proved by my twenty years of experience.”

In June, 1853, a third effort was made by the Fairfield West Association to bring Bushnell to trial. The form of attack was a demand, signed by fifty ministers, that the Hartford Central Association be excluded from the general body, on the ground that by protecting Bushnell it had sanctioned a scheme which “is a corruption of God’s

holy truth, a subversion of all vital and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and destructive of confidence in revelation itself." It also accused the Hartford Central of "subverting the doctrinal basis of our union and fellowship in the General Association."<sup>1</sup> The Hartford Association had become aware of this measure before the meeting was held, and had prepared a reply — drawn up by Drs. Porter and Patton — protesting "against this invasion of our rights," and reaffirming that Dr. Bushnell's opinions, as expressed in his books, might be erroneous, but are not fundamentally so, and are not liable to the charge of subverting the doctrinal basis of the General Association. A long and bitter debate was brought to a close by an adroit resolution presented by Dr. Leonard Bacon, which satisfied the Hartford Central, and secured a majority that defeated the Fairfield West Association. The resolution — an admirable illustration of the hindering force of general phrases — was substantially as follows: —

"With the opinions *imputed* to Dr. Bushnell by the complainants, we have no fellowship. Candidates for the ministry who profess them should not be approved. Ministers reasonably charged with holding them are properly subject to discipline, in due form and order. But whether these opinions are *justly* imputed to Dr. Bushnell, or not, depends upon the construction given to cer-

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. E. P. Parker's pamphlet on *The Hartford Central Association and the Bushnell Controversy*, p. 21.

tain quotations from his books ; and upon that question we have nothing to say."

Each sentence was a door of escape from trial, and the key-word in each was so commanding and so dear to Congregationalists that hesitation was impossible. It was a triumph of sagacity and common sense. Resolutions were then offered advising the General Association to secure a trial of Bushnell before a mutual Council, but they were promptly tabled. A protest was entered against such action, as closing the door to all redress ; this was met by a declaration that there was no further need of action.

The final effort of the Fairfield West was made the next year, 1854, at the annual meeting in New Haven. Resolutions were introduced requesting the General Association "to cease from appointing persons to certify to the standing of ministers in its connection, and submitting that if such certificates are given, we cannot be responsible for them." It was also intimated that its own future appearance in the body would depend upon the adoption of these resolutions. It overshot the mark in this proposed action, and the only question raised in the Association was whether to table the resolutions, or to unseat the delegates for introducing so destructive and schismatic a proposal. Bushnell, by an unexpected stroke, opposed either course, and urged that the resolutions "be entered on the records and published with the minutes of the association." He supported his resolution in a

speech of great ability, but too full of the technicalities of the case to be of general interest. They are the last words in a noisy but not useless controversy. It not only enforced a study of Bushnell's positions, but those of the conservative side. The re-definitions of orthodoxy were made with ability and clearness, but it is to be doubted if they strengthened the cause they championed. Bushnell won slowly and never wholly, but his critics as slowly and more surely lost ground. Both were passing on to a new order.

The ecclesiastical side of the controversy is interesting as being probably the last effort that will be made in New England, as has already been said, to bring an author to trial for his theological opinions. Churches may still call councils to advise them what action to take in view of the preaching of the pastor, but the day has gone by when ecclesiastical bodies will sit in judgment on books. The effort in Bushnell's case did not reach a trial; that it failed was due to several causes, chief of which was the tenuous, elastic, and intensely democratic form of the Congregational system. It was made for fellowship and spiritual freedom, and not for guarding a dogmatic faith. However it may have been used for enforcing a formal orthodoxy, it was not constructed for that purpose. Its efforts in securing dogmatic platforms have been neither useful nor successful. Hence, in late years, trials for heresy have chiefly been carried on by the religious newspaper, — a

faded image of the inquisition, as unreasoning and relentless, but less fatal than fagots. Another reason for the failure was the invincible common sense of the majority of the ministers forming the General Association. It ran ahead of their orthodoxy and held them in check. They did not agree with Bushnell, but to thrust him out of their ranks for making "improvements in theology" — a thing which began with Edwards, and had been going on ever since, and in no place so rapidly as at New Haven, where most of them had been educated — was not to be thought of. Their action, or rather refusal to act, was due not to approval or sympathy, except in a few cases, but to the absurdity of doing otherwise. The result was also due to the man himself. He had had a legal training, and — with all his mysticism — he had a legal mind. He planted himself upon the Congregational order, and his rights in it as they were defined in the functions of the local Association. If it had presented him for trial, he would not have held back, but he neither courted nor shunned it. When forced into the conflict at the meetings of the General Association, he showed himself a stout but dignified antagonist. We cannot find that his Christian character was impeached except in the form of accusations of presumption in handling his great themes, — a strange charge to come from those who did not hesitate to define the interior nature of the Godhead as against one who refused to define it. Bushnell was a bold and

venturesome, but not a presumptuous thinker ; nearly every contention was a protest against presumption.

But there were two sides to this controversy. Bushnell was an accused but hardly a persecuted man, as he himself recognized in the felicitous dedication of his first volume of sermons to his church, "who have adhered to me in days of accusation." He had no reason to expect other treatment than that he received, and he came well out of it. One has only to recall the hold dogmatic belief had on the clergy and people of New England in the first half of the century, and the violence of Bushnell's attack upon it, to understand why he encountered so vigorous criticism. Two centuries before, the Legislature of Massachusetts had ordered Pynchon's book on the "Meritorious Price of our Redemption" to be burned, and he himself probably underwent an analogous process at the hands of Rev. John Norton, who was appointed to reply to it.<sup>1</sup>

Compared with this, the treatment of Bushnell

<sup>1</sup> "His book of 1650 denied that Christ suffered the torments of hell, or was under the wrath of God, or paid the exact penalty of our sins divinely imputed to him ; and affirmed that the price of our salvation was his mediatorial obedience, — the voluntary offering of himself, — which disposed the Father to forgive sin. Thoughts similar to some of these were to appear in a modified form in that conception of Christ's work which the younger Jonathan Edwards was so successfully to advocate in the closing years of the eighteenth century, that it has become known as the 'New England Theory ;' but New England was not ripe for such speculators in 1650." (Professor Williston Walker, *History of Congregational Churches*, p. 216.)

was gentle, while his offense was more irritating. He questioned the prevailing orthodoxy at all points, — inspiration, regeneration, trinity, atonement, miracles, — and otherwise challenged the common ways of thinking. Criticism so wholesale was fully equal to any that he himself encountered, and one would be an over-partial advocate who should put in a plea for sympathy. It was, indeed, many against one, but Bushnell knew that he was on the winning side. Nor was he careful to placate his orthodox brethren by gentle treatment; he might have gone further in that direction with good results. What could be expected after such words as these: “I do peremptorily refuse to justify myself, as regards this matter of trinity, before any New England standard. We have no standard better than a residuary tritheistic compost, such as may be left us after we have cast away that which alone made the old historic doctrine of trinity possible. I know not whether you design to make a standard for me of this decadent and dilapidated orthodoxy of ours; but if you do, then I appeal to Cæsar; I even undertake to arraign your standard itself before the tribunal of history.”<sup>1</sup>

These are not irenic words; moreover, his critics knew that with all his claims of an older orthodoxy, the past belonged to them rather than to him. Bushnell himself did not claim to be its champion; he simply knew, after a late discovery,

<sup>1</sup> *Christ in Theology*, p. 175.

that some of its statements of doctrine were better than those made later. They also knew that his study of the past had not been closer or more careful than their own. Bushnell appealed to the past when it sustained him, but his reliance was upon himself. It was the modern tone, and the suspicion that it was an echo from Germany, and a presage of Boston Unitarianism, that disturbed them and lent urgency to their complaints. Their infelicities in method were not exceptional in the ecclesiastical world, and simply followed immemorial precedent. It only remains for us to throw the mantle of charity over their unhappy and misguided contention, and one corner of it must be made to cover him who was the occasion of it.

The action of the General Association in 1854 made it certain that Bushnell could never be tried for heresy. The relief it brought to him may be inferred from a letter to Mr. Chesebrough written several months before the final issue. It is introduced here as of possible interest to those who may be inclined to engage in the business of defending the kingdom of God by trying the authors of theological books for alleged heresy.

HARTFORD, January 23, 1854.

May God in his mercy deliver me, so long as He lets me stay in this life, from all this ecclesiastical brewing of scandals and heresies, the wire-pulling, the schemes to get power or to keep it, the factions got up to vent wounded pride and get



compensation for the chagrin of defeat, — all, the whole from Alpha to Omega, Lord save me from it! The mournful thing of it is, that no man can be in it and be in the love of God. I think I am certain of it. How can a manager in this field be in the peace also of the Spirit? How can a heart burn with the holy fire when the unholy and earthly is burning so fiercely in it?

The last phase of his ecclesiastical troubles was perhaps the most annoying of all. A dissatisfied minority in his Association withdrew and formed another Association. The feeling of one member extended to a rupture of all personal relations, but was overcome at last by Bushnell's friendly overtures and irenic explanations of his opinions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the Rev. Joel Hawes, D. D., the pastor of the Centre Church in Hartford. The grounds of agreement stated by Bushnell were his assent to the Nicene doctrine of the trinity, and to the "equivalent expression" doctrine of the work of Christ as commonly held in New England. Bushnell's sermons frequently indicate his assent to the latter doctrine, though not in a dogmatic sense; it was an idea to which any one would assent, if it were not offered as a full theory of the atonement. It was by no means Bushnell's doctrine on the subject. Whether it was just to offer "equivalent expression" to Dr. Hawes as a sufficient ground of orthodoxy on the atonement is a question of casuistry upon which we shall not enter further than to say that he offered all that was asked, and withheld what he knew would find no acceptance. Dr. Hawes was equal to the occasion, and showed himself a shrewd and kindly man by accepting the basis stated and again rejecting the book. The strained relations gradually came to an end, and a sincere friendship followed. One is tempted to imagine, however, that when they met, it was sometimes with the soothsayer's smile. We could wish that the reconciliation had not involved theology.

More irritating was the charge that he had yielded to the pressure and gone back to orthodoxy. He refers to the matter in a letter to Dr. Bartol: —

HARTFORD, June 7, 1855.

Our friend Bellows, whom I saw and dined with on my way to Cuba, told me quite frankly that he, and I think you also, were unable to look on my letter of reconciliation with Dr. Hawes as being less than a recantation. This quite surprised me, for Hawes himself looks upon it in no such manner, and all the notices I have seen from my orthodox friends — I don't say my orthodox enemies, — have said plainly that my letter is no recantation, or in any wise different from the published sentiments of my books. I think you have fallen into this error by not attending as closely as you might to certain references, and taking Hawes' construction of some things, where he goes beyond them.

The charge of recantation was not strange, but it was unjust. It is possible that it was due in part to disappointment over what was considered Bushnell's tendency. He certainly cut off all expectation that he would enter the Unitarian ranks. But his acceptance of the Nicene doctrine of the trinity was not a denial or recall of what he had said, but only a qualification. He had discovered what it meant, and reinterpreted it in his own broad way. The Unitarians were still reading it

in the light of their Arian sympathies, and had not learned to regard it as a protest and break-water against Eastern polytheism, and as an assertion of the oneness of God and humanity, — a view of it that did not escape such men as Drs. Frederick Hedge and James Walker, the foremost theologians in the Unitarian communion.



## **CHAPTER XII**

### **SEARCH FOR HEALTH**

“It would not answer even for the Christian who has meant to surrender his will, and really wants to be perfected in the will of God, to be made safe in his plans and kept in continual train of successes. He wants a reminder every hour; some defeat, surprise, adversity, peril; to be agitated, mortified, beaten out of his courses, so that all remains of self-will in him may be sifted out of him, and the very scent of his old perversity cleared. O, if we could be excused from all these changes and somersets, and go on securely in our projects, it would ruin the best of us. Life needs to be an element of danger and agitation,—perilous, changeful, eventful; we need to have our evil will met by the stronger will of God, in order to be kept advised, by our experience, of the impossibility of that which our sin has undertaken. It would not even do for us to be uniformly successful in our best meant and boliest works, our prayers, our acts of sacrifice, our sacred enjoyments; for we should very soon fall back into the subtle power of our self-will, and begin to imagine, in our vanity, that we are doing something ourselves. Even here we need to be defeated and baffled, now and then, that we may be shaken out of our self-reliance and sufficiency, else the taste of our evil habit remains in us, and our scent is not changed.” — BUSHNELL, *Sermons for the New Life*, p. 420.

## CHAPTER XII

### SEARCH FOR HEALTH

BUSHNELL, though a man of great physical strength and vigor, was an invalid nearly half his life. We find him in 1839 "complaining again of throat trouble," and visiting Saratoga for relief. But not till 1845 did the breakdown actually come. A journey to North Carolina in April failed to bring relief, and a year in Europe was determined on and provided for by his church. He sailed in July, and landed in Falmouth after a voyage of twenty days. He followed the usual route of American tourists in Europe, — through England and the Scotch lakes, Belgium, the Rhine, Switzerland, Italy, Geneva, Paris, a prolonged stay in London, where he did some literary work, and a return home in June. He saw what the ordinary tourist sees, and much beside, — the real meaning and charm of the art and music and architecture and scenery that fell in his way. At Heidelberg he first suspected from certain symptoms that he might be the victim of consumption. It cost him a temporary struggle, — not a strange thing in a man of forty-three, — but he found "rest in God," and went about his sightseeing with his usual irre-

pressible vigor. He saw everything in a moral light, but his canons were broad. Of the castles on the Rhine he says: "Joy be to their ruins! Let them stand for all the coming ages as a monument of a day when there was no law." On the slope of the Scheideck he tried a wayside wooden trumpet, and in its echoes found the text for a passage in the address on "Religious Music," which Mr. E. P. Whipple pronounced one of the most eloquent in the language. Of Mont Blanc he says that "it sleeps on its base." He does not complain of clouds or the intervening hills. "I have observed a hundred times that the sublime requires the unknown as an element. A cathedral should never be finished. A mountain should be partially hidden by others or enveloped in clouds." He rejoiced in the avalanches on the Jungfrau: "One is not fairly still before another comes; the ice-thunder is never over, and the sense of eternity is added to the sense of power. Far up in the cloud region, yet on earth, we hear the tumult of the frost giants waging the perpetual battle." He attends the meagre service at the cathedral in Geneva, and questions if "this falling off is not the penalty of Calvin's intolerant spirit." The cathedral in Milan "is a marble mountain hewn into a forest of spires and statues." In the Pitti gallery he notes that "the painters and sculptors derived their arts from their trades, . . . the law of all healthful growth in the fine arts." He admires yet misunderstands Michael Angelo, as "wanting in



that delicate sensibility necessary to a complete and universal sense of beauty," — a singular verdict, for the two men were largely endowed with the very quality deemed lacking. Michael Angelo's Moses is a Pluto, "an eminently unreligious statue." Of the Transfiguration he says: "The supernatural is here clothed in the natural, the spiritual in the terms of physics." He does not take the conventional view of the French. "The volatile Frenchman, always a proverb, I have not seen." In London he encountered the "Oregon question," then a matter of boundary and strained relations between the two countries, on which he wrote an effective letter; he hoped the two nations would not go to war "for the sake of a territory so worthless," for such was the estimate then put on Oregon. Here also he preached and published his sermon on "Unconscious Influence." The vespers at the Abbey led him to "the firm conclusion that if I were to be an Episcopalian, I would certainly have the liturgy sung or chanted."

Of his three months in London, he said it proved to be "just the thing I wanted. It does not crush me or anything like that, but it shows me what a speck I am. Anything that makes us know the world better, and our relations to it, the ways of reaching mankind, what popularity is worth, how large the world is, and how many things it takes to fill it with an influence, — anything which sets a man practically in his place, is a mental good, a good of manners, of feeling, — dignity itself."

He reached home in June, apparently in greatly improved health, and plunged at once into work both in his church and outside of it, in the way of public addresses and book-making. His personal appearance at this time is thus described: "The spare, sinewy figure, tense yet easy in its motions; the face, then smoothly shaven, showing delicate outlines about the cordial, sweet-tempered mouth; the high, broad forehead, straight to the line where it was swept by the careless hair, just streaked with gray; the kindling gray eyes, deep-set under beetling blackeyebrows; and, above all, the abrupt yet kindly manner, indicating in its unaffected simplicity a fund of conscious power."

"The Moral Uses of Dark Things" was soon under way in the shape of sermons. "Christian Nurture" in its complete form followed, but came to publication first. The floods of accusation rose at once, and continued to flow for years, with brief intermissions and increasing volume. Under the combined stress of his incessant labors with pen and voice, and fret over the efforts to bring him to trial, — always unavailing, as we have seen, but still harassing, — it is not strange that his already impaired health began to call for rest and change. In 1852 he made a two months' journey to the West, going as far as St. Louis. The next year he spent his summer vacation in Sharon Springs, and returned to throw himself into the work of securing a public park in his city. The next year, 1854, brought an end to controversy, but an at-

tack of bronchitis left him in such a condition of health that he was driven to seek a milder climate. He spent three months in Cuba, and returned in April, 1855, hardly better than when he went away. He spent the summer among his native hills, making notes on the "Supernatural," which in the winter he put into such shape that it could not be lost. March of the next year found him en route for California, where he remained, chiefly at the San José Mission, during the remainder of the year. His life here was characteristic to the last detail.

He threw himself into the life of the new State with the zest of a boy and the wisdom of a statesman. First of all, he studied the climate, that being his first concern. He is sure that one in search of health "should set off, not for Europe, but for California" (*The New Englander*, February, 1858). No problem in his "Moral Uses of Dark Things" is more carefully worked out than that of the way in which ocean currents, mountain ranges and passes, trend of valleys and sweep of winds, and many other physical causes unite to produce "the varieties and incredible anomalies of the California climates."

The variety of his studies and interests, especially in engineering and topography, reminds one of Da Vinci. If Bushnell had a passion outside of theology, it was for roads, and he closely connected the two; the new country afforded him a wide field for each. He was a critic of all he

saw with the eye, and a builder in imagination of such as were needed or were possible. He foresaw a railroad across the continent,—hardly dreamed of as yet,—and, having examined all feasible routes of entrance into San Francisco, named the one that was finally chosen. He found the city under the reign of the famous vigilance committee, which he half indorsed, though it went against his instinctive sense of law and order. He wrote letters to the papers and preached in his usual “vein of comprehensiveness,” hoping to guide public sentiment in the right direction. He seems never for a moment to have been idle in mind or body. He took up his residence in San José Mission, in the Santa Clara valley, near the base of Mount Hamilton, where he soon began to gain sensibly in health. Every mile within a radius of twenty of this beautiful region was gone over with the eye of a surveyor, an engineer, a naturalist, a poet, and a philanthropist. He was already well known to his clerical brethren,—an able body of men,—and they at once turned to him as a natural leader in their recently formed project for establishing a college. Bushnell gave himself to this enterprise with immense energy and thoroughness, and after personal examination of seven proposed sites, named Berkeley, where the College, later the University of California, now stands. The presidency was offered to him, and declined on the ground that his health was so far recovered that he was able to serve his parish, to which he

felt that he owed a prior allegiance. Dr. Henry A. Stimson refers to this episode as follows : —

“ Horace Bushnell, a stranger and an invalid as he was, left an enduring impress upon what is now the great University of California. When called in 1856 to the presidency of the college that was to be, he, seemingly the last man for such duties, gave himself to the practical details of seeking a site with the proper requirements of soil, situation, water supply, etc., while he aroused the interest of that gold-seeking community to the needs of the future. ‘ If I can get a university on its feet, or only the nest-egg laid,’ he wrote to his distant Eastern friends, ‘ I shall not have come to this new world in vain.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

While at San José Mission, Bushnell finished “ Nature and the Supernatural,” and projected another work on the “ Laws of Grace, or Laws of the Supernatural.” Such a book, if written, would have led him into the realm of his deepest insight.

“ Laws are the alphabet of our knowledge on the footing of nature. So far, God will show us his way and conduct us into his will. . . . Laws are not, therefore, broken up by the specialties of faith, but are only transcended. Or rather we may say that we are now exploring and searching out the higher laws of God, even those of his personal society and goodness.”

On his return to Hartford in January, 1857, he preached a notable sermon on “ Spiritual Dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Review of Reviews*, July, 1899, p. 453.

lodgments," from a characteristically chosen text, "Moab . . . hath settled on his lees," etc., putting the long separation between pastor and people to the highest spiritual uses. He once more plunged into work as though he were a sound man, but the "predurable toughness" was gone. He "dreaded a long pull," but could not make "short designs." Treatises as well as sermons were always in his mind. He soon brought out the volume "Sermons for the New Life," keeping back "Nature and the Supernatural" for closer revision, — a wiser course than he knew, for the sermons by their great popularity prepared the way for the treatise. Indeed, his sermons always plead against any suspicion of heresy. So far as they were used by his critics, they were quoted for their orthodoxy in order to bring out his inconsistency, which led Bushnell to write: "I am brewing now a new heresy, which, if God spares my life, I shall certainly give to the world; even if I must die in the smoke of it."

In May, 1858, his people sent him away for a needed rest, and set about finding an associate pastor, as his health gave no promise of improvement. This position was filled successively by Rev. C. D. Helmer, Rev. G. N. Weber, D. D., and Rev. George B. Spalding, D. D., — Bushnell preaching often in the intervals between them. In the spring of 1859 he resigned his pastorate, and in July started with his wife for Minnesota, spending the winter chiefly at St. Anthony's Falls. His cor-

respondence at this time is rich in apt and profound generalizations of experience: "We can do anything or bear anything with a good-will, if it is only necessary." "There is no teaching so good as that which we get in the solid training of works and duties." "Put yourself on the footing of sacrifice." "Nothing is clear which is not cleared by the Spirit."

In April, 1860, he left the West somewhat invigorated, stopping at Clifton Springs for three months and returning for the winter, where he prepared for republication "Christian Nurture," and the tenth chapter of "Nature and the Supernatural," under the title of the "Character of Jesus."

It is sometimes said of Bushnell that he was a restless and impetuous thinker, rushing from one subject to another on some slight impulse. It is not quite true; he was a busy thinker, but not a restless one, nor did he start hastily on new quests. It is characteristic of him that all his leading contentions had their genesis early in his career, and were almost never absent from his thoughts. It was at this time that he wrote: "Instead of working at any oracle of my own, I let time chew my question for me, and am simply looking on. This habit has grown out of my theologic habit of referring questions I cannot answer to the same arbitrament."

He returned to Hartford in April, 1861, gathered his family about him, and made no more lengthened journeys in search of health. He was

a confirmed invalid, but by no means a broken-down man. Nearly half of his work of publication was done after this time, and if any of it bears the marks of disease, they are not signs of weakness, but of moral and spiritual ripeness.



## **CHAPTER XIII**

### **“NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL”**

"The grandest natural agencies are but servitors of a grander than themselves. Using nature as his organ, he transcends it; the act in which he does so is the exercise of his own Free Volition, rendering determinate what was indeterminate before: it is thus the characteristic of such acts to be supernatural; and Man, so far as he shares a like prerogative, occupies a like position; standing to that extent outside and above the realm of natural law, and endowing with existence either side of an alternative possibility. At both ends, therefore, of the scheme of Cosmical order, are beings that go beyond it; all that is natural lies inclosed within the supernatural, and is of the medium through which the Divine mind descends into expression and the Human ascends into interpreting recognition." — JAMES MARTINEAU, *Nature and God*, vol. iii. pp. 147, 148.

## CHAPTER XIII

### “NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL”

“NATURE and the Supernatural,” Bushnell’s most thorough and complete treatise, was the fruit of that kind of study which he gave to all subjects, — close observation and brooding thought. It might be said of him that from first to last he thought of little else than the relation between these two terms. He was well fitted for this discussion in himself; the whole play of his mind had this double cast of natural and supernatural. But the conception of nature that was taking shape struck in him a responsive chord. The reign of law had already laid hold of him, and his own experience furnished data for the complementary thought. In 1853 we find him saying that “the supernatural is the necessary complement of nature; . . . my mind turns naturally in this direction.” But he did not enter an untrodden path. He had read Edwards carefully enough to see that he cared little for miracles in comparison with spiritual experiences.<sup>1</sup> Schleiermacher and Cole-

<sup>1</sup> “The greatest privilege of the prophets and apostles was not their being inspired and working miracles, but their eminent holiness. The grace that was in their hearts was a thousand times more than their dignity and honor, than their miraculous gifts.” (Edwards’ *Works*, vol. i. p. 557.)

ridge, the only writers who greatly influenced him, — one teaching that “miracles are not a component element in our faith in Christ,” the other that “miracles of themselves cannot work conviction in the mind,”<sup>1</sup> — had furnished hints he was not slow to follow. But a special incentive came from a prevalent treatment of nature which he calls “Naturalism,” and characterizes as “the new infidelity.”

The book opens by calling attention to the “primitive habit of mind” which led men “to believe in that which exceeds the mere terms of nature ;” “everything was supernatural.” This tendency was met in Greece by the Sophists, who resolved the myths of religion into natural history, a process to which the Sadducees were subjecting Judaism at the time of Christ. This raises the question whether “Christianity will not experience the same fate.”

“From the first moment or birth-time of modern science, if we could fix the moment, it has been clear that Christianity must ultimately come into a grand issue of life and death with it, or with the tendencies embodied in its progress. Not that Christianity has any conflict with the facts of science, or they with it. On the contrary, since both it and nature have their common root and harmony in God, Christianity is the natural foster-mother of science, and science the certain hand-

<sup>1</sup> Professor George P. Fisher, D. D., *History of Doctrine*, pp. 508, 448.

maid of Christianity. And both together, when rightly conceived, must constitute one complete system of knowledge. But the difficulty is here : that we see things only in a partial manner, and that the two great modes of thought, or intellectual methods, — that of Christianity in the supernatural department of God's plan, and that of science in the natural, — are so different that a collision is inevitable and a struggle necessary to the final liquidation of the account between them ; or, what is the same, necessary to a proper settlement of the conditions of harmony " (p. 19).

After reviewing the various forms under which naturalism — which is not to be confounded with nature — is sapping the foundations of Christianity, some of which still hold good, while others have lost their significance, he states his purpose, which is "*to find a legitimate place for the supernatural in the system of God, and show it as a necessary part of the divine system itself. . . .*" The world was made to include Christianity ; under that becomes a proper and complete frame of order ; to that crystallizes, in all its appointments, events, and experiences ; in that has the design or final cause revealed, by which all its distributions, laws, and historic changes are determined and systematized." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Even the coming of God in Christ is not contrary to the fundamental constitution and laws of the universe, but rather the consummation of the continuous action of God immanent in the universe and ever coming near to man in the courses of human history." (Professor Samuel Harris, D. D., *God the Creator and Lord of All*, vol. ii. p. 493.)

We have here a foreshadowing of the interpretation which Christian thought is now putting on Evolution as involving an ethical purpose and end in creation. Bushnell was as much of an evolutionist as he could be in his day. Agassiz's classification of species was the limit of his scientific acceptance of it, but there were times when his insight into the nature of things took him further into the great law that soon came to dominate all thought, — as when he says that "there is, in the whole of things called nature, an about-to-be, a definite futuration, a fixed law of coming to pass, such that, given the thing, or whole of things, all the rest will follow by an inherent necessity. In this view, nature . . . is that created realm of being or substance which has an acting, a going on or process from within itself, under and by its own laws" (p. 36).

But nature is not the universe. "God has erected another and higher system, that of spiritual being and government, for which nature exists; a system not under the law of cause and effect, but ruled and marshaled under other kinds of laws and able continually to act upon, or vary the action of the processes of nature. If, accordingly, we speak of system, this spiritual realm or department is much more properly called a system than the natural, because it is closer to God, higher in its consequence, and contains in itself the ends or final causes, for which the other exists and to which the other is made to be sub-

servient. There is, however, a constant action and reaction between the two, and, strictly speaking, they are both together, taken as one, the true system of God" (p. 38).

In singular agreement with Martineau (on our prefatory page), who, however, wrote later, he asserts "that the moment we begin to conceive ourselves rightly, we become ourselves supernatural. . . . In ourselves we discover a tier of existences that are above nature and, in all their most ordinary actions, are doing their will upon it. The very idea of our personality is that of a being not under the law of cause and effect, a being supernatural" (p. 43).

He thus lays down the fundamental position of his treatise; namely, "that nature is that world of substance whose laws are laws of cause and effect, and whose events transpire, in orderly succession, under those laws; the supernatural is that range of substance, if any such there be, that acts upon the chain of cause and effect in nature from without the chain, producing, thus, results that, by mere nature, could not come to pass. It is not said, be it observed, as is sometimes done, that the supernatural implies a suspension of the laws of nature, a causing them, for the time, not to be, — that, perhaps, is never done, — it is only said that we, as powers, not in the line of cause and effect, can set the causes in nature at work, in new combinations otherwise never occurring, and produce, by our action upon nature, results

which she, as nature, could never produce by her own internal acting" (p. 43).

Two things are to be noticed here, — that the supernatural does not imply a suspension of the laws of nature, and that man is a supernatural being. The latter rests on personality, and this on the will. The air in New England was still too full of the great Edwards to admit of Bushnell's passing by this leading factor without discussing the place of motives in determining human action, and their relation to the will. It was partly concession to prevailing thought, — the necessary incident to a still dominant theology and also to the nature of the subject, — and partly it was inevitable in himself; he had lived too long in the climate of "the will" to escape its fascinating entanglements, but after all his discussion of it he drops "motives," and finds freedom in "the indisputable report of consciousness." The discussion of the will in New England — and for more than a century it was the chief subject of theological debate — was a two-edged sword. In the hands of Edwards it aimed to defend divine foreknowledge and decrees as necessary to a divine government of the world; but while it seemed thus to uphold Calvinism as against Arminianism, it involved a practical necessity which bred an infidelity that outweighed the faith that was preserved, — a fatal process, interrupted only by an unconquerable sense of freedom. A hundred and fifty years of discussion failed to do what consciousness, left to itself, does in a moment.



It has been reserved for the great poet of the century to put the problem, which is simply a part of the insoluble problem of the relation of the finite to the Infinite, into words which express at once its substantial reality, its mystery, and its sacred uses : —

" Our wills are ours, we know not how ;  
Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

The treatise would have lost nothing if Bushnell had contented himself with this simple assumption. His discussion is not beyond criticism ; taking the sword, he is sometimes slain by it, as when, farther on, he asserts a bondage of the will under sin. But in spite of slips of this kind, his line of thought not only opens in the direction of freedom, but touches the borders of present-day psychology, which looks less to motives and more at the will itself. He thus escapes the endless chain of causation which entangled the older discussions and confounded their quest for freedom.

Having established his thesis of a supernatural and a natural system, — the latter subordinated to the former and together constituting the one system of God in which man occupies a place in the supernatural by virtue of his will or personality, — he goes on to show the inability of nature by itself to inspire and satisfy men, — lacking the other factor to dominate and direct it. This point is skillfully elaborated by citations from organic and inorganic life, showing how in nature itself there are "two grand systems of chemical force

and action ; one of which comes down upon the other, always from without to dominate over it, . . . producing substances which the other could not."

He runs marvelously close to the evolutionary theory of creation, but rejects it on grounds which no longer have force. A full doctrine of the divine immanence would have rendered needless many brilliant pages. In them, however, we find the distinction between "things" and "powers" which is fundamental to his main contention, — "Nature is only stage, field, medium, vehicle, for the universe; that is, for God and his powers." The apparent dualism can easily be passed by; the truth after which he is feeling is clear and indisputable. However it may be with his science, — and it was often astray, being of its age, — it was correct enough to uphold him in his effort to broaden the field of the supernatural. Wherever there are "things" there are "powers," and these are supernatural. "Powers" dominate "things" and use them for their own end. Even if the "powers" sin, it is but a sign of that free agency which constitutes the supernatural. The sin is the incident in a system that has for its end the development of "powers" as of more value than "things." "God preferred to have powers and not things only" (p. 96). Thus he escapes the charge of offsetting nature and miracle. Natural and supernatural constitute a universal order and an every-day process. It is by such a path,

beginning in the lowest forms of nature, that he finds his way up to holiness as God's last end; and when that is gained, it will be seen that it is the culmination of a process that embraces all the stages of creation. The redeeming work of Christ will not appear as an intrusion into a continuous order, but only as another and a supreme instance of the supernatural entering into the natural. "The cross of redemption is no after-thought, but is itself the grand all-dominating idea around which the eternal system of God crystallizes" (p. 139).

In successive chapters Bushnell discusses the problem of existence as related to evil; the fact of sin; the consequences of sin; the anticipative consequences of sin; and development or self-reformation not a remedy for sin. In the first three of these chapters he is in substantial agreement with the later school of New England theology so far as the freedom of the will, which he defines to be simply a volitional function, is concerned; but he diverges from, though he does not contradict it, in regarding the beginning of sin as due to "conditions privative that are involved as necessary incidents in the begun existence and trial of powers." He connects it, however, with a doctrine of angels, good and bad, that later exegesis would set aside; but it does not weaken his assertion that character lies in the will, a necessary assertion if he would get sin into the category of the supernatural under cover of the

will. "To violate the law of God is itself an act supernatural" (p. 143). Hence "nothing but a supernatural agency of redemption can ever effectively repair it." He thus paves the way to a supernatural Christ and a redemption that is more than self-reformation; it is sin that requires a supernatural remedy.

As an illustration of his sense of the reality of sin, we quote this striking passage, which will be recognized, not as a logical inference, but as an appeal to consciousness:—

"Every person of a mature age, and in his right mind, remembers turns or crises in his life, where he met the question of wrong face to face, and by a hard inward struggle broke through the sacred convictions of duty that rose up to fence him back. It was some new sin to which he had not become familiar, so much worse perhaps in degree as to be the entrance to him consciously of a new stage of guilt. He remembers how it shook his soul and even his body; how he shrunk in guilty anticipation from the new step of wrong; the sublime misgiving that seized him, the awkward and but half-possessioned manner in which it was taken, and then afterward, perhaps even after years have passed away, how, in some quiet hour of the day or wakeful hour of night, as the recollection of that deed—not a public crime, but a wrong, or an act of vice—returned upon him, the blood rushed back for the moment on his fluttering heart, the pores of his skin opened, and

a kind of agony of shame and self-condemnation, in one word, of remorse, seized his whole person. This is the consciousness, the guilty pang, of sin ; every man knows what it is.

"We have also observed this peculiarity in such experiences ; that it makes no difference at all what temptations we were under ; we probably enough do not even think of them ; our soul appears to scorn apology, as if some higher nature within, speaking out of its eternity, were asserting its violated rights, chastising the insult done to its inborn affinities with immutable order and divinity, and refusing to be further humbled by the low pleadings of excuse and disingenuous guilt. To say, at such a time, the woman tempted me, I was weak, I was beguiled, I was compelled by fear and overcome, signifies nothing. The wrong was understood, and that suffices" (p. 151).

It is such pictures from life and appeals to experience that make one regret that Bushnell ever troubled himself to speculate on the nature of the will or of sin. It is like measuring the speed of the wind and the volts of the lightning to prove the reality of the tempest.

In chapter sixth, which treats of the "Consequences of Sin," amid much overstatement and without due recognition of the fact that the penal is often redemptive, there occurs another passage of keenest insight upon the effect of sin in the soul. It is such passages as these, drawn straight from life, that carry his argument on and over his

not always consistent statements ; insight triumphs over definition : —

“ Given the fact of sin, the fact of a fatal breach in the normal state, or constitutional order of the soul, follows of necessity. And exactly this we shall see, if we look in upon its secret chambers and watch the motions of sins in the confused ferment they raise, — the perceptions discolored, the judgments unable to hold their scales steadily because of the fierce gusts of passion, the thoughts huddling by in crowds of wild suggestion, the imagination haunted by ugly and disgusting shapes, the appetites contesting with reason, the senses victorious over faith, anger blowing the overheated fires of malice, low jealousies sulking in dark angles of the soul, and envies baser still, hiding under the skim of its green-mantled pools, — all the powers that should be strung in harmony loosened from each other, and brewing in hopeless and helpless confusion ; the conscience meantime thundering wrathfully above and shooting down hot bolts of judgment, and the pallid fears hurrying wildly about with their brimstone torches, — these are the motions of sins, the Tartarean landscape of the soul and its disorders, when self-government is gone and the constituent integrity is dissolved. We cannot call it the natural state of man ; nature disowns it. No one that looks in upon the ferment of its morbid, contesting, rasping, restive, uncontrollable action can imagine, for a moment, that he looks upon the sweet, primal

order of life and nature. No name sufficiently describes it, unless we coin a name and call it a condition of unnature" (p. 173).

The close of this chapter on the "Consequences of Sin in the Natural World," and the next chapter, on the "Anticipative Consequences," might well be omitted, were they not revelations not only of limitations, but also of how nobly he can err. There is no anticipation of sin in palæontology nor elsewhere before man. That there is "premeditation prior to creation," and that man is the end in view and the outcome of creation from its beginning, is, next to the Copernican system, the most valuable contribution to human knowledge ever made by science, but it anticipates order and not disorder. Sin can be put into divine foreknowledge, but not even by symbol into creation. Bushnell's mistake sprang out of a habit of making everything contributory to his point. He was always a jealous lover of his subject. Wherever he looked, he saw the truth he was contending for, and he impressed into its service whatever his facile imagination could bring within range. Sin stands before him a great reality, and he will show it to be great in order to suit the proportions of the redemption he has in mind. Hence he finds signs of it wrought into the very texture of the globe, and traces it out with wild and splendid rhetoric; but every instance cited is instead a prophecy of perfection.<sup>1</sup> It was not wholly due to mistaken

<sup>1</sup> The whole subject is admirably treated by Professor James

thinking, nor to the lingering influence of a passing theology, but also to the fact that science had not yet emphasized the evolutionary theory of creation. Still, it is difficult to find sufficient excuse for thought so contrary to its usual tenor.

The chapter on "No Remedy in Development, or Self-reformation" is written with great care, and in its latter pages with a profound sense of the need of God in order to remedy the evil of sin and to regenerate character. It abounds, however, in ethnological and physiological illustrations that no longer bear the interpretation put on them. That which is called supernatural, or a type of it, for instance, the healing of a wound (p. 230), is quite as natural as any part of growth. It is recovery and may serve as an analogy to a moral process, but it is wholly natural. Bushnell here incurs the danger of dealing too confidently with natural science. He drew his dividing lines over-sharply. Clement, whom he quotes, says, "I saw nothing but the piling up and tearing down of theories." The interpretations of one day yielded

D. Dana in the *New Englander*, vol. xvii. p. 293, an exhaustive article, in which he shows that the real anticipation of man in nature is man's need, not his sin and retribution. Bushnell used nature to fortify a doctrine of sin and so made it almost sinful. Dana saw nature as a related whole; and each thing as it bore on the general purpose. It is, however, just to Bushnell to say that he anticipated if he did not answer this inevitable criticism in chapter iv. page 98: "God's unities are all, in the last degree, unities of end, or causal as related to end; consisting never in a perfect concert of parts or elements, but in a comprehensive order that takes up and tempers to its own purposes many antagonisms."



to those of the next; the supernatural became natural, and both tend more and more to a spiritual interpretation, which may perhaps have the unity of the spirit. But these slips in science do not weaken the force of his claim that self-reformation is not effected as Alcibiades said, "by the will," but as Plato said, "by God's will" (p. 243).

Having shown that "there is no hope for man or human society, under sin, save in the supernatural interposition of God" (p. 250), Bushnell asks if there is any rational objection to such interposition. This always has been and is the hard question in connection with miracles, Are they reasonable? When the reason raises the question, it will not be satisfied with a negative answer; they will be denied, or they will be accepted on some ground of historic evidence that silences but does not satisfy reason. Bushnell delivered thought out of this slough by including miracles under law, and naming the law *supernatural*, assuming that law is reason itself. This point is worked out with great ability, especially in that part of the chapter in which he contends that law in nature implies law in the supernatural, particularly as seen in the nature of God, quoting with effect Hooker's saying that "the being of God is a kind of law to his working." Whatever becomes of nature and supernatural when brought under so unifying a force as law, the objection to miracles as unreasonable disappears.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A remark of Rothe on this point is of interest. "Here I

It is with this triumphant note that he enters upon the famous tenth chapter, where he contends that the character of Jesus forbids his possible classification with men. This chapter almost supersedes the rest of the volume, even as it surpasses all in sustained interest and adequacy of treatment. It has the finish of a classic, and by frequent republication has already become one. Despite Bushnell's uncertain handling of the humanity of Christ in theological analysis, upon no other theme does he write with so profound sympathy. Having established his general thesis that the disorders of sin require a supernatural divine ministration to overcome them, he approaches Christianity as "a kind of miracle, a power out of nature and above, descending into it." Christ is "the central figure and power, and with him the entire fabric stands or falls" (p. 276).

must face the question, how I dispose of the grave difficulties which seem to be involved in the very nature of a miracle. In respect to this question I find myself somewhat embarrassed, not, however, by the solution of the difficulties, but because I do not see that any difficulties exist. I will in all simplicity out with my honest confession, that to this hour I have never been able to make it clear to myself how my rational nature could possibly take offense at the conception of a miracle. It may arise from this, that I am so thoroughly a theist in my nature that I could never find in myself the least trace of deistic or pantheistic feelings. In part it may arise from the fact that as a matter of principle I have ever held these two questions distinctly apart, — the simply abstract inquiry, whether a miracle in itself is rationally conceivable, and the concrete, whether, in a given case, a reported miracle, even if it be in the Bible, is to be received as having occurred in fact." (*Studien und Kritiken*, 1858, pp. 24, 25. Quoted from the *New Englander*, vol. xvii. p. 251.)

A few quotations will indicate the drift and spirit of the chapter.

"Christ is no liberal, never takes the ground or boasts the distinction of a liberal among his countrymen, because it is not a part of his infirmity, in discovering an error here, to fly to an excess there. His ground is charity, not liberality ; and the two are as wide apart in their practical implications, as adhering to all truth and being loose in all. Charity holds fast the minutest atoms of truth, as being precious and divine, offended by even so much as a thought of laxity. Liberality loosens the terms of truth ; permitting easily and with careless magnanimity variations from it ; consenting, as it were, in its own sovereignty, to overlook or allow them ; and subsiding thus, ere long, into a licentious indifference to all truth, and a general defect of responsibility in regard to it. Charity extends allowance to men ; liberality, to falsities themselves. Charity takes the truth to be sacred and immovable ; liberality allows it to be marred and maimed at pleasure. How different the manner of Jesus in this respect from that unreverent, feeble laxity, that lets the errors be as good as the truths, and takes it for a sign of intellectual eminence, that one can be floated comfortably in the abysses of liberalism. 'Judge not,' he says, in holy charity, 'that ye be not judged ;' and again, in holy exactness, 'whosoever shall break, or teach to break, one of these least commandments, shall be least in the kingdom of God.' So magnificent

and sublime, so plainly divine, is the balance of Jesus. Nothing throws him off the centre on which truth rests ; no prejudice, no opposition, no attempt to right a mistake, or rectify a delusion, or reform a practice " (p. 312).

" But before we drop a theme like this, let us note more distinctly the significance of this glorious advent, and have our congratulations in it. This one perfect character has come into our world, and lived in it ; filling all the moulds of action, all the terms of duty and love, with his own divine manners, works, and charities. All the conditions of our life are raised thus, by the meaning he has shown to be in them, and the grace he has put upon them. The world itself is changed, and is no more the same that it was ; it has never been the same since Jesus left it. The air is charged with heavenly odors, and a kind of celestial consciousness, a sense of other worlds, is wafted on us in its breath. . . . It were easier to untwist all the beams of light in the sky, separating and expunging one of the colors, than to get the character of Jesus, which is the real gospel, out of the world. Look ye hither, meantime, all ye blinded and fallen of mankind, a better nature is among you, a pure heart, out of some pure world, is come into your prison, and walks it with you . . . . In him dawns a hope, — purity has not come into our world, except to purify. Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world ! Light breaks in, peace settles on the air, lo ! the prison walls are giving way, — rise, let us go " (p. 330).

It will be noticed that Bushnell does not contend for the non-classification of Jesus with men on ontological grounds. Once only, and then but slightly, does he refer to the miraculous birth. It is the perfection of his character that puts him beyond classification with men and into the supernatural. But having already put men in this category, he so far includes men and Jesus in the same classification, and separates him from men only by the moral perfection of his humanity. It would be untrue, however, to infer that Bushnell's thought of the person of Christ did not go further than this.<sup>1</sup> But in this chapter there is an irenic tone that reveals where his thought rested as he strove to show that the perfectly human separates Jesus from men. His sympathetic reader to-day overlooks the aim, and rejoices in the pages as showing that the perfectly human is divine.

In the chapter (p. 333) in which the miracles of Christ are discussed, the usual line of argument is pursued, often with great keenness, but with the common result of unsatisfactoriness due to the in-

<sup>1</sup> "A German theologian finds the unparalleled power of Jesus in the unlimited range of his sympathies. He stands apart from and above all men in greatness. He is absolutely unique. He is, as Bushnell said, unclassifiable. But is not his uniqueness this, that he is not provincial, local, and narrow, but universal; that he knew what is in man as no other has known, and that he had power and sympathetic union with men and women of any nation and any religion? He whose uniqueness made him the Son of God was he whose universality made him the Son of man. Dr. Dörner therefore lays down the principle that the uniqueness of Jesus is his universality." (President George Harris, D. D., *Inequality and Progress*, p. 147.)

herent difficulty of the subject. The time for a proper discussion of the historicity of miracles had not fully come.

The claim that God acts only "immediately on the whole" is well met: "The argument by which all particular action is excluded, would require that God should never have begun to act immediately anywhere. Creation is thus philosophically impossible. God, therefore, has had nothing to do, but to be chained to the wheel from eternity, acting immediately on some eternal whole that is self-existent as He; allowed to begin nothing, vary no part or particle, held by a doom to his eternal totality. Is it this which 'the idea of God' requires, this by which our idea of God is fulfilled?" (p. 343).

In conclusion, the question is referred to the general problem of Jesus; the miracles do not prove him, he proves the miracles:—

"The character and doctrine of Jesus are the sun that holds all the minor orbs of revelation to their places, and pours a sovereign self-evidencing light into all religious knowledge. . . . It is no ingenious fetches of argument that we want; no external testimony, gathered here and there from the records of past ages, suffices to end our doubts; but it is the new sense opened in us by Jesus himself—a sense deeper than words and more immediate than inference—of the miraculous grandeur of his life; a glorious agreement felt between his works and his person, such that

his miracles themselves are proved to us in our feeling, believed in by that inward testimony. On this inward testimony we are willing to stake everything, even the life that now is, and that which is to come. If the miracles, if revelation itself, cannot stand upon the superhuman character of Jesus, then let it fall. If that character does not contain all truth and centralize all truth in itself, then let there be no truth."

The chapter on "Miracles and Spiritual Gifts not Discontinued" is usually regarded as a detraction from the book, especially in view of the examples cited. Bushnell himself said of it that it cost him more of a sacrifice to insert it than anything he ever did. While it was not necessary to his main contention, it was almost unavoidable. As the corrective of naturalism, which is a recurring if not an abiding feature of human thought, the supernatural seems to be also called for as a constant attendant. Besides, the supernatural was so far extended over the domain of what was usually regarded as nature, and as they together constituted the one system of God, it seemed absurd to shut out the play of the greater factor and give it over to the doubtful keeping of historic remembrance. Such considerations evidently weighed with him, but his pen labored under the difficulties involved; miracles, even under law, are beset with so much hazard, and run to such excesses, that he is driven to the supposition that they are periodic, — appearing when they are necessary to

correct the rationalism begotten by unvarying law.

Almost the last writing done by Bushnell was a few pages of a proposed treatise on the Holy Spirit, — too brief to indicate what his treatment would have been ; but we cannot avoid the surmise that if he had lived to complete it, he would have found in the ever active Spirit of God a power that superseded the need of intermittent miracles to quicken faith. The trouble with his thought here is that he failed to keep it within limits; his ardor carried him over the borders, whence he could return only by weakening explanations. But how much better is this than dull, unimaginative shortcoming ! And how much better also is over-faith than under-faith !

Of the book as a whole it should be said that it is not a study of the Christian miracles. It is not the miraculous but the supernatural that engages Bushnell's attention. He assumed but did not treat crucial points such as the supernatural birth of Jesus and the ascension. He did not enter upon questions of historicity, — it was too early, but he did something more important : he contended that nature and the supernatural constitute one system, and that " powers " are greater than " things." This is fundamental and inclusive ; all else is — not unimportant, but relatively so. Did Christ rise from the dead ? If so, it was according to law. This is fundamental and eternal. The historic treatment of the details of



miracles is a matter that belongs to a region not yet fully entered; but whatever the outcome of criticism, the service rendered by Bushnell was and is still of greatest value. A recognition of the reign of law and the continuity of force was rapidly entering into the thought of the day. The claim that God suspended the law in order to reveal his special presence or power was losing its force;<sup>1</sup> the "great bell" no longer rang clear. The crass dualism involved in the conception of law and miracle began to plague thought with suspicion and uncertainty. If miracle stood for God, and nature for itself, each factor was too great for the other; the dualism must be resolved, and unity of some sort established. In the light of modern criticism and exegesis, it is easy to see which way the current was flowing. If the traditional definition were insisted on, miracles would go by the board; no doctrine on the subject could be retained, and naturalism would hold the field. Whatever the future of the question may be, Bushnell made it possible for reason and faith to keep together, at least for a time. But he did more; he hewed a path — rough but not blind — into that realm of the Spirit to which the age is slowly opening its eyes. He interpreted the world spiritually. Laws are not ends, but means for getting into the free world of the Spirit, which dom-

<sup>1</sup> The word *suspended* is used because it defines the popular conception of a miracle then held. The more careful definitions of Canon Mozley (*Bampton Lectures*) and Professor Fisher (*Grounds of Theistic Belief*) had not yet been made.

inates all things because it has created all. He enforces the distinction between "things" and "powers," and names the latter "supernatural." It is in this light that his book has permanent value. It is to be regarded, not as an argument for miracles, but for the supernatural.

Its reception was what might have been expected. It was extensively reviewed both at home and in Great Britain, where, if it did not escape criticism, it received kinder treatment than here.

A letter to Dr. Bartol indicates in a word the situation in which the critics put him: —

"I will try to comfort myself in the hope that I am about right when you, on one hand, set me down as the demolisher of nature, and the 'New Englander' complains, on the other, that I defer too much to nature, and am too much under her power." And again: "It is really hard times with a poor fellow. The 'New Englander' tries me all through by the New Haven theology, and Dr. James makes me a ninny for being in the New Haven theology. About everything said on one side is thrown back on the other, and I am pelted all round."

But little of this criticism was based on its merit or demerit, — so determining was theological prejudice. That he was regarded in Boston as a "demolisher of nature" and in New Haven as deferring "too much to nature" is a reflection of the fixedness of the thought in each region. It

was evident that a fresh thinker had broken into the world of New England theology. But while the shepherds were contending over the book,—one side denying that it was food for faith, the other that it was true,—the flock found their way to it, and were fed and comforted. Like "Christian Nurture," it was another deliverance, and another lesson in the Christian faith.



## **CHAPTER XIV**

### **"THE VICARIOUS SACRIFICE"**

“ The Latin or Western or scholastic type of theology . . . is wholly different. Its dominant thought is the divine transcendence — the thought of God as the Sovereign, Ruler, and Judge, remote from the earth in some sphere of light unapproachable; and of nature and man as something alien to God, or alienated from Him, the mere subject of His laws. Latin theology is the description of a scheme for bridging over this vast interval. It is ‘saturated with Roman Law.’ This conception, essentially dualistic, tends to dualism and division everywhere. It sharply distinguishes the natural from the supernatural, the material from the spiritual, the sacred from the profane, the human from the divine. It leads on to distinctions of converted from unconverted, laity from clergy, inspired from uninspired, Church from world. It creates a passion for distinctions. It separates the Father from the Son; God’s justice from His mercy; the gift from the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It defines everything; and definition almost necessitates the materialization of our thoughts; it defines the stages of salvation, the modes and conditions of transmission of the Divine Life through the Sacraments and the other kindred rites of the Church; and it identifies the acceptance of such definitions with Churchmanship, and even with faith. . . . This type of theology colours opinion on every region of thought. Miracle tends to be regarded as an occasional interference of God with His own laws. Life is dwelt on rather as a probation than as an education. The Fall is interpreted as a historical or quasi-historical event in time. It is explained as having involved all Adam’s posterity in guilt and alienation from God, and necessitated an intervention, almost an after-thought in God’s plans; a transaction by which men, though sinful, might be relieved of the penalty of their sin. The whole of Latin theology follows by a sort of logical necessity; and theology has occupied itself rather with the logic of its deductions than with the fundamental ideas on which all depends. It is inventive and it is insistent. Salvation is a scheme of ‘interposition between two permanently distant objects.’ It is a superhuman transaction rather than a spiritual process. It may take the vulgar but fatally intelligible form of a commercial transfer of merit from Christ to us, and of penalty from us to Christ. Even this must come, it may be taught, through fixed and definable channels.” — The Rev. J. M. WILSON, Archdeacon of Manchester, *The Gospel of the Atonement* (Hulsean Lectures, 1898–99), p. 144.

## CHAPTER XIV

### “THE VICARIOUS SACRIFICE”

THE *Atonement*, used as the general name for the work of Christ, was never absent from the mind of Bushnell, but the first hint we have of his purpose to write upon it is found in a letter to a friend in 1859: “I think the day is at hand when something can be done for a better conception of the work of Christ. Here is the great field left that I wait for grace and health to occupy.” Two years later, in a letter to his wife, he states his plan, — from which, however, he varied somewhat, — and reveals also the spirit in which he entered upon his work. “Things now are getting into some shape in this great field, where, you know, I have been toiling after *shape* for these two years. I mean to realize my original, heaven-given thought of a book on the Vicarious Sacrifice for Christian experience, and propose to make it possible by a volume, to precede, on the doctrine of the Sacrifice, — to precede, however, not in time, but in order, and to be published, both, as separate, and also as volumes I. and II. Call the one, say, ‘Vicarious Sacrifice in Christ;’ and the other, ‘Vicarious Sacrifice in Believers,’ or by any such like title. . . .

"I never saw so distinctly as now what it is to be a disciple, or what the keynote is of all most Christly experience. I think, too, that I have made my *last* discovery in this mine. First, I was led along into initial experience of God, socially and by force of the blind religious instinct in my nature; second, I was advanced into the clear moral light of Christ and of God, as related to the principle of rectitude; next, or third, I was set on by the inward personal discovery of Christ, and of God as represented in him; now, fourth, I lay hold of and appropriate the general culminating fact of God's vicarious character in goodness, and of mine to be accomplished in Christ as a follower."

The stages to which he refers are, first, his early conversion in youthhood; second, his experience while a tutor, described in a sermon on "The Dissolving of Doubts;" third, that revelation of the meaning of the gospel which led to his writing "God in Christ;" fourth, the conceptions of sacrifice and forgiveness which were to ripen into the present volume. There seems to be an evolution almost scientific in the order and accuracy with which one thing led to another, but it was evolution under an environment as well as through an inner force. In one sense there was not this orderly advance from one subject to another: all were thrust upon him at the very outset. But he had a habit of "hanging up a subject;" "I let time chew my questions for me." Still, the environment pressed upon him, and at last drove him to utter-



ance. He found himself face to face with doctrines which he could accept only under wide qualifications, and a prevailing habit of thought with which he had little sympathy. If he is regarded as a development, we can see that the time had come when it was possible for him to do his work, even in the very order in which it has been named. At the beginning of his ministry he would have found no audience and no toleration. It would seem that Calvinism must run an ordained course and exhaust itself under its own self-destructive energy. Its “improvements” and modifications did not point to continuance, but to extinction ; they were not as leaf to bud and fruit to flower, but were the crumbling away of foundations.<sup>1</sup>

Theology, like nature itself, may rest on the Will of God, but it cannot forever rest on a doctrine of divine sovereignty that vests itself in decrees of election to salvation or reprobation on the ground that each is necessary to reveal the glory of God. It is not easy to account for its existence in a system of Christian theology. Its history can be partially traced, but nothing wholly accounts for it except the uncertain play of the human mind when it undertakes to reduce the thoughts and purposes of God to a system drawn out of existing institutions and based on a handbreadth of knowledge. Its

<sup>1</sup> “It has been said that Calvinism is a philosophy in its essence ; and I do not object to it on that account, but because it is not to me a true philosophy.” (John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement*, p. 53.)

defenders are as inexplicable as itself. The history of the doctrine in New England is an ecclesiastical tragedy, and often it turned personal life into one. After its full restatement by Edwards, that process of "improvement" began by which it wasted itself just in the degree in which it commended itself to reason; it could not overtake the thought of the world, nor resist the spirit of humanity that underlay Arminianism, and was bedded in English literature and institutions. It was a system incapable of real improvement for the simple reason that it took away ethics as between God and men, and denied the divine Fatherhood. When Hopkins modified Edwards by asserting that God is essential love rather than justice, yet retained the doctrine of decrees in its unmitigated form, the very incongruity weakened the system as a whole. It was at this point that the inevitable dismemberment began which has left the churches of the "Standing Order" in New England, that once held the entire ground, one of many sects, and so greatly changed that it can hardly recognize itself as even the remnant it has become. It was then that Universalism and Methodism came in like a flood, — one protesting against the inhumanity of Calvinism, the other against its necessarianism. It was then that the Unitarian movement began to take form as a general protest; but being chiefly such, it failed to realize the organic life which the Standing Order has preserved, having other springs of life than its doctrinal system.

It was in connection with the doctrine of the atonement that the “improvements” in theology were of greatest moment. A limited or semi-limited atonement, however logical its deduction from a doctrine of decreed reprobation, could not forever withstand the first fact of the gospel that Christ died for all men. Nor could the conception of it as a satisfaction of divine justice made by Christ’s bearing the penalty of sin, whether of all men or only the elect, long stand up against those conceptions of the individual which, born of Puritanism, had ripened and were bearing fruit in the political life of the country. Under the younger Edwards and President Dwight it was modified until it became what is known as the “governmental theory;” that is, roughly stated, the atonement maintains the general justice of God by expressing his hatred of sin; this done, his government is sustained and He is able to forgive sin. It contains an idea which no one who believes in the atonement denies, but that it constitutes the atonement is another matter. It simply states the universal truth that suffering may be a symbol or expression of broken law, but the claim that its chief purpose is to maintain the rectoral honor of God is a narrow judicial treatment of a wide human fact. Under Dwight and Taylor and other New England divines it was built up into a vast scheme, in which the Christian truths were clothed in legal forms and made to do duty in maintaining what was termed the moral government of God.

It had a great deal to do with justice, but little with life. It was a legal transaction, not a moral achievement. It is true, if one cares to think of it in that way, but it is not the way in which men incline to think except under the drill of a system that requires it.<sup>1</sup>

Bushnell shrank from it, even when a student at New Haven, where it was taught with power. It was for him too shadowy a form to hold the great reality; too far off from life to meet its necessities, and it lacked the link that bound the individual to the living and dying Christ.<sup>2</sup>

He took to himself at the outset the advantage of a descriptive title that well-nigh covers his entire

<sup>1</sup> John McLeod Campbell quotes Luther's warning "to abstain from the curious teaching of God's majesty," and while not laying it at the door of Owen and Edwards in their discussion of the question, "What is divine justice?" says: "It would have been well that they had used the *life* of Christ more as their *light*." He adds, "I feel as if the recorded work of Christ were contemplated in their systems in the light of (their) reasoning, rather than that reasoning engaged in after the due study of the life of Christ." (*The Nature of the Atonement*, pp. 50, 53.) (This criticism is fundamental and covers all Calvinistic theories of the atonement, including the "governmental theory.")

<sup>2</sup> Professor A. A. Hodge, in his *Outlines of Theology*, on other grounds than these, speaks of it as "a theatrical inculcation of principles which were not truly involved in the case;" and that "it degrades the infinite work of Christ to the poor level of a governmental adjustment, whereas it was the most glorious exhibition of eternal principles." While Princeton spoke thus of the theory of the atonement, almost universally held in New England, it is not strange that the wayfaring man was puzzled as to the way whenever he crossed the Hudson; nor is it strange that Bushnell felt driven to find a third position that might either absorb or consume the other two.

contention: "The Vicarious Sacrifice Grounded in Principles of Universal Obligation." In later editions the title was varied by changing "of universal obligation" to "interpreted by human analogies." The change was made when a later book, "Forgiveness and Law," was incorporated as a second volume. It is not to be understood that he abjured the phrase "universal obligation;" it is far more expressive of his underlying thought than the adopted phrase. "Universal obligation" offered surer ground for his main contention than "human analogies." The differentiating element in analogy is deceitful; the unlikeness is lost in the general likeness, and the analogy is often made to carry a point from which the unlikeness would exclude it. Moreover, as government is a human analogy, it leads back into the governmental theory, where Bushnell had no thought of going; but "principles of universal obligation" sharpen his meaning in the "moral view."

"I have called the treatise by a name or title that more nearly describes it than any other. It conceives the work of Christ as beginning at the point of sacrifice, 'Vicarious Sacrifice;' ending at the same, and being just this all through, — so a power of salvation for the world. And yet it endeavors to bring this sacrifice only so much closer to our feeling and perception, in the fact that it makes the sacrifice and cross of Christ his simple duty, and not any superlative, optional kind of good, outside of all the common principles of

virtue. ‘Grounded,’ I have said, ‘in principles of duty and right that are universal.’ It is not goodness over-good, and yielding a surplus of merit in that manner for us, but it is only just as good as it ought to be, or the highest law of right required it to be; a model, in that view for us, and a power, if we can suffer it, of ingenerated life in us” (p. 32).

No attempt will be made to present the contents of these two volumes beyond the barest outline of the argument and a few quotations that sum up his thought and indicate the spirit in which he wrote. The latter is of far more concern than the former. We are not now interested, except in the antiquarian’s way, in the discussion by which one view or another of the atonement was upheld, and we feel almost as little interest in the discussion by which it was redeemed from them. The age has its own point of view, and does not depend upon that of the past.

The first volume is divided into four parts, the first of which contends that there is “nothing superlative in vicarious sacrifice, or above the universal principles of right and duty.”

“Love is a principle essentially vicarious in its own nature, identifying the subject with others, so as to suffer their adversities and pains, and taking on itself the burden of their evils. It does not come in officiously and abruptly, and propose to be substituted in some formal and literal way that overturns all the moral relations of law and desert,

but it clings to the evil and lost man as in feeling, afflicted for him, burdened by his ill deserts, incapacities, and pains, encountering gladly any loss or suffering for his sake. Approving nothing wrong in him, but faithfully reproving and condemning him in all sin, it is yet made sin — plunged, so to speak, into all the fortunes of sin, by its friendly sympathy. In this manner it is entered vicariously into sacrifice on his account. So naturally and easily does the vicarious sacrifice commend itself to our intelligence, by the stock ideas and feelings out of which it grows" (p. 42).

"What we call the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is nothing strange as regards the principle of it, no superlative, unexampled, and therefore unintelligible grace. It only does and suffers, and comes into substitution for, just what any and all love will according to its degree. And in this view, it is not something higher in principle than our human virtue knows, and which we ourselves are never to copy or receive, but it is to be understood by what we know already, and is to be more fully understood by what we are to know hereafter, when we are complete in Christ. Nothing is wanting to resolve the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus but the commonly known, always familiar principle of love, accepted as the fundamental law of duty, even by mankind. Given the universality of love, the universality of vicarious sacrifice is given also. Here is the centre and deepest spot of good, or goodness, conceivable. At this point we look into

heaven's eye itself, and read the meaning of all heavenly grace " (p. 48).

He protests against "the fiction of superlative merit," and contends that "Christ was under obligation to do and suffer just what he did " (p. 58). The thought is extended to God: "In these burdens (of Christ) God as the Eternal Father suffered before him." Here Bushnell's favorite and even dominant thought of the passibility of God comes out, — an idea that supplements his treatment of the humanity of Christ, and practically fills its place.

"Christ is a mediator only in the sense that, as being in humanity, he is a medium of God to us ; such a medium that, when we cling to him in faith, we take hold of God's own life and feeling as the Infinite Unseen, and are taken hold of by Him, reconciled, and knit everlastingly to Him, by what we receive " (p. 71).

"Whatever we may say, or hold, or believe, concerning the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, we are to affirm in the same manner of God. The whole deity is in it, in it from eternity, and will to eternity be " (p. 73).

He contends that "vicarious sacrifice belongs to men ; " that it is a mistake to suppose that "Christ in the matter of vicarious sacrifice is a being by himself " (p. 106). He asserts that "sacrifice is the economic law of discipleship " (p. 116).

Part second is devoted to showing that "the life and sacrifice of Christ consists in what he



does to become a renovating and saving power" (p. 127). He says that "Christ is not here to die, but dies because he is here;" and brings to his support the great name of Anselm, who said: "He suffered death of his own accord, not as an act of obedience, but on account of his obedience in maintaining right; for he held out so persistently, that he met death on account of it" (p. 131). The primary object of Christ is "the healing of souls," and is illustrated by the "Christed consciousness of the disciples:" —

"It is not the account of their Christian experience, and of the gospel as related thereto, that Christ has done something before God's throne, and wholly apart from all effect in them, to make their acceptance possible; and then that the Holy Spirit, by a divine efficiency in them, changes their hearts. No such theologic gospel of dry wood and hay is the gospel of the apostles. They find everything, in their human nature, penetrated by the sense and savor and beauty and glory of Christ. Their whole consciousness is a Christ-consciousness, — everything good and strong in them is Christ within. Worsted in all their struggles of will-work and self-regeneration, they still chant their liberty in Christ and say, 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free.' Their joy is to be consciously Christed, fully possessed by Christ; to have him dwell in them, and spread himself over and through all the senses and sentiments, and willings, and works of their life" (p. 159).

The remaining chapters of this part show how "Christ in his sacrifice becomes the moral power of God," and set forth his life and teachings in that light.

"The view of Christ's mission I have been trying to establish excludes the possibility, it will be seen, of any dogmatic formula in which it may be adequately stated. It is not a theorem, or form of thought, but a process, and the process includes all the facts of a life. . . . The Scriptures themselves do not know how to make up any formula . . . that will adequately express, in the manner of our theologians, the import of Christ's reconciling work. That work, accurately speaking, consisted in exactly the whole life of Jesus, — all that he said and did, and, to human impression, was, in the conditions through which he passed" (p. 213).

The moral power of Christ reaches its highest point in the fact that "he humanizes God to men" <sup>1</sup> (p. 230). It is at this point that Bush-

<sup>1</sup> "The true relation of mankind to the Lord Jesus is not grasped until he is regarded as the Incarnation of the Eternal Humanity in which the race is constituted. The philosophy of the prologue to the Fourth Gospel is essential to the understanding of the advent and career of Jesus. There is eternally in the Godhead a rational, creative humanity, and in that divine humanity our race is constituted. . . . The Eternal ideal humanity and the historic fact meet in the prophet of Nazareth. The Eternal thus manifests himself through the divinely human career, and, after the history is made which forever renders impossible the denial that the ideal is the real, the Eternal returns to his preincarnate fullness and universality." (Rev. George A. Gordon, D. D., *The Christ of To-day*, p. 235.)

"That the divine Logos rules in history is the sole presupposi-

nell urges at length and with great force the passibility of God : " Here then it is, in the revelation of a suffering God, that the great name of Jesus becomes the embodied glory and the Great Moral Power of God. In it, as in a sun, the divine feeling henceforth shines ; so that whoever believes in his name takes the power of it, and is transformed radically, even at the deepest centre of life, by it, — born of God " (p. 230). But it is *moral* power, not penal nor expiatory ; the natural sympathy of one being with another by reason of love.

We could almost wish the book had ended at this point. So far it has been a plea for the " moral view " of the atonement ; and there could hardly be a stronger one. It might well be detached from the rest of the treatise and made a handbook on the subject. It may be surpassed in theological and exegetical accuracy, but not easily can its contention be made with profounder insight or closer sympathy. It was hardly possible at the time of his writing wholly to avoid the legalism of the subject. The doctrine had almost no place in the thought of the day except in its relations to justice, penalty, forgiveness, righteousness, and justification, — all treated in a forensic tion of faith which Evolution sets up. To follow the manifold phenomenal forms of this Logos is the task of science. Theology, so far as it is a science of religion, and not merely ecclesiastical piecework, finds the revelation of the divine Logos in the totality of religious history, in all the expressions and forms of development of the human consciousness of God." (Pfleiderer, " Evolution and Theology," *The New World*, September, 1898, p. 429.)

way. But these are matters that are now left to every-day thought, to the natural action of conscience, to the play of the religious nature, to the established convictions of mankind, to what all men believe and no man denies, to the life of Christ, and to a conscious experience of that life. They cannot be made factors in a legally conceived theory of a phase of Christ's history called the atonement.<sup>1</sup>

It was not so in the middle of the century. Notwithstanding the modifications of the doctrine since Edwards, some of which were improvements and some not, it was still imbedded in a mixture of legalism and metaphysics, each interpreted by the other. Much had been cast off, such as the theory that Christ suffered the penalty of sin; imputation of sin to Christ and of his righteousness to the believer; willingness to be forever cast out for the glory of God; the sinfulness of "unregenerate doings;" sin the necessary means of the greatest good; salvation freely offered yet conditioned on election, — all of which bore in one way or another on the atonement.<sup>2</sup>

Its hold on the people was largely due to the vast amount of intolerable doctrine it supplanted, — such as a limited atonement, in the light of

<sup>1</sup> "A theology which does not correspond with the deepest thoughts and feelings of human beings cannot be a true Theology." (F. D. Maurice, *Introduction to Theological Essays*.)

<sup>2</sup> For a most lucid statement of the early New England doctrine, see Professor Fisher's *History of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 394-419.

which it seemed reason itself. But it was cold, hard, and distant; it was expressive, not impressive; spectacular, not real. In a word, it was not life, but a legal interpretation of a phase of life which had been modified until it seemed to be the whole of it. It is possible to set the atonement as it was unfolded in New England, in many lights. The able authors of "Progressive Orthodoxy" (p. 51) say of New England theology that "it attempted to find the ethical ends secured by the atonement. It emphasized the fact that other methods than punishment can express the character of sin." The New Haven School led up to this point by its theory of the atonement as consisting in an *expression* of God's abhorrence of sin, and regard for his law. Bushnell broadened and ultimated this *expression* by making the ethical good of men the end of the atonement; that is, he took it out of the region of legalism and laid it straight down upon life itself. The difference is as great as that between a picture and the landscape it outlines. It may be possible to get on without one, but not without the other. Bushnell, rather needlessly, devotes much time to the picture. He thought it was necessary to enter into this world of legalism in order to deliver the doctrine out of it. It must also be said that he himself had not fully escaped from it. No man wholly rids himself of the dominant ideas of his age; or if he does, he is without a field and a vocation. He felt that he must justify "the moral view" in this

world of legalism. The doctrine thus preserved something of historical continuity and allied itself to the form at least of natural growth; and above all, it avoided schism. It is possible, indeed, that the thought of the coming age would itself have eliminated the legalism left in the doctrine, and saved a discussion that could not do the work of time and growth.

He begins by a protest against resolving Christ's work under "political analogies" unless they are carefully qualified by others.

"What is said of law and justice, under the analogies of human government, does not appear to hold, without qualifications not given. It cannot be that such analogies of law and justice and penalty and pardon, prepared in the civil state, are not to be used in religion. Like all other analogies of the outward life, they were designed to be. And yet there are few close observers, I suspect, who have not sometimes been so far impressed, by the fatalities discovered in attempts to resolve Christ's work under this kind of analogy, as to seriously doubt whether anything reliable can be thus accomplished. There certainly cannot be, unless the analogy is carefully qualified by others, such, for example, as those of the family, the field, the shop, the market. There is also another kind of qualifier, that is obtained by getting a partially distinct footing for the subject, in a province of thought which is not under such analogies" (p. 233).

This province is the assumption that law is "before God's will and before his instituting act:" it is "that necessary, everlasting, ideal law of *right*, which, simply to think, is to be forever obliged by it" (p. 235). Obedience to this law makes a complete society until disobedience brings in confusion and disorder, when God institutes "government and redemption together" (p. 243). While asserting the reality of the Fall, he admits that it is mythical in form. It stands between primal or ideal law and instituted government. Here he finds "the want and true place of redemption. It must have some primary and even principal reference to the law before government, and not to any instituted law, or statute, or judicial penalty existing under that" (p. 251).

However uncertain this line of thought may be, his purpose is clear; namely, to get the doctrine out of the cumbering analogies of human justice into the realm of eternal law, where it easily and naturally allies itself to life and the direct consciousness of right and wrong, and especially, as "instituted government inaugurates justice and penal sanctions," he closes the door against these troublesome factors and secures an open field for "the moral view." Still, he admits that if instituted government does not contain redemption, it is a necessary co-factor of it, but at the same time he rejects all penal views and compensations to justice, and the like. In short, he takes out of instituted government what suits his purpose and

leaves the rest. In this he is entirely justified, using, as he does, a criterion superior to that of human analogies. "God nowhere signifies that he has given up the world to the prior right of justice, and that mercy shall come in, only as she pays a gate-fee for the right of entrance." Still, after many pages of keen analysis, he finds that they "coalesce at the root." The only surprise is that this should ever have been doubted. His conclusion is : —

"On the whole, this matter of a contrived compensation to justice, which so many take for a gospel, appears to me to contain about the worst reflection upon God's justice that could be stated, without some great offense against reverence; for in whatever manner the compensation, or judicial satisfaction, is conceived to be made, in the suffering of Christ, we shall find everything pushed off the basis of truth. The justice satisfied is satisfied with injustice! the forgiveness prepared is forgiveness on the score of pay! the judgment-day award disclaims the fact of forgiveness after payment made, and even refuses to be satisfied, taking payment again! What, meantime, has become of the penalties threatened, and where is the truth of the law? The penalties threatened, as against wrong-doers, are not to be executed on them, because they have been executed on a right-doer! viz., Christ. And it is only in some logically formal, or theologically fictitious sense, that they are executed even on him" (p. 293).



But if Christ does not bear the penalty of the law, he honors it: "Christ has set the law precept in a position of great honor and power, enduing it with such life and majesty, in men's convictions, as it otherwise never could have had. (1.) He proposes, we have seen, no remission of sins which does not include a full recovery to the law. (2.) All that he does and suffers in his sacrifice, he as truly does for the resanctification of the law as for our recovery. (3.) In his incarnation, he incarnates the same, and brings it nigh to men's feelings and convictions, by the personal footing he gains for it in humanity. (4.) He honors it again by his obedience, which is, in fact, a revelation of God's own everlasting obedience, before the eyes of mankind; the grandest fact of human knowledge" (p. 321).

Still, legal penal enforcements are necessary, and are associated with the power of Christ, so that he "combines both kinds of motivity," — his own moral influence and natural retributive forces. Disengaging this from its setting, we find ourselves very near the simple fact that the influence of Christ and the every-day laws of morality are hand in hand. Since Christ has taken into his work the natural retributions of sin as a co-working factor, he declares the fact in two ways: "First, eternal punishment; second, the judgment of the world by himself." Bushnell, shrinking somewhat from the first, says that "eternal need not mean eternal in the exact speculative sense," but "it is the pun-

ishment of the eternal state, and is best apprehended here, when taken as a practical finality." He refuses to "make a bad eternity hang on the form of a word." He was incapable of hedging, but this careful use of words is made to lead in opinions which, though stated hypothetically, reached almost to convictions, such as the wasting away of the soul until the "religious nature is likely to be nearly, or quite gone by" (p. 337); not extinction, it will be observed, but practically that,— "an asymptote curve forever approaching a fixed point, but never reaching it." The subject is practically treated in a sermon on "The Capacity for Religion Extirpated by Disuse." (Sermons for the New Life, p. 165.)

It is before such speculation as this that one draws off. His definition of "eternal" opens a door that humanity would enter. "Purgatorial restorationism," he says, "has no show of evidence or possibility." His argument requires a penalty commensurate with the moral elements contained in salvation, and he finds it not in conscious pain, but in a wasting away of faculties, thus depriving penalty of its edge under such psychological possibilities that it may cease to be penalty. The mind refuses to follow him on this conjectural path. But, still shrinking from eternal punishment, he devotes two pages (pp. 338, 339) to a vigorous protest against "the infinity of future punishment," meaning quantity, not duration. He thus ran counter to the prevailing thought on the subject,

which made much of time and intensity. “Since the law of God is the best law possible, he ought, in true justice, to make the strongest expression of attachment to it that is possible ; therefore that he ought to inflict the strongest possible punishment for the breach of it ” (p. 339), — an argument that he treats with ridicule, and asserts that penalty will be according to demerit. He also admits with Baxter, though less heartily, “that God is ready, at any future point in the run of it (misery), to embrace, in everlasting reconciliation, any truly repenting soul ” (p. 340). Bushnell reduces the possibility of this to hopeless improbability under psychological processes for which there are no sure data. His full position on endless punishment is this : —

“Assuming all these qualifications of measure and degree, there is nothing left in the matter of endless punishment, by which we can fitly be disturbed, except that it does not bring out the kingdom of God in that one state of realized unity and complete order which we most naturally desire, and think to be worthiest of his greatness and sovereignty. It certainly would be more agreeable, if we could have this hope ; and many are resolved to have it without Christ’s permission, if they cannot have it with. They even make it a point of merit to seize this honor bravely for God, on their own responsibility, and for it, if they must, defy the Scripture. I think otherwise, and could even count it a much braver thing to willingly be less

brave, and, despite of our natural longings for some issue of God's plan that is different, follow still the lead of the Master " (p. 341).

It is strange that Bushnell was not more impressed by what he so clearly saw; namely, that endless punishment "does not bring out the Kingdom of God in that one state of realized unity and complete order which . . . we think worthiest of his greatness and sovereignty." It is difficult to explain this lowering view of the kingdom of God which his own statement would seem to contradict. Bushnell held the key to a better interpretation in his theory of language, but failed to use it here. His treatment of the subject is labored and uncertain; the heart protested against the head, and the head still felt the sway of theories of inspiration and interpretation that were to endure yet longer. But in spite of this stringency, he was vigorously criticised as "scarcely knowing what the conception of penalty is" (*The New Englander*, vol. xxv. p. 252). His defective conception was thought to determine his theory of atonement. If atonement is an endurance of penalty, the two must be fully correlated; and if penalty is the expression of God's displeasure, the atonement must express it. Such was the logic. Bushnell did not deny it, but he denied that it exhausted the atonement or was its central idea. But to say that he had no conception of penalty is like asserting that Newton knew nothing of gravitation. His pages blaze and thunder with it, but he speaks of more than displeasure with sin.

The remaining chapters of part third are devoted to a thorough exposition and criticism of the prevailing theory of substitution and the older theories of penal satisfaction, followed by an exceedingly able discussion of justification by faith, — finding in "the moral view" the exact field where this great doctrine has full and free play.

But a stronger objection to the "moral view" than any he had dealt with was to be found in the sacrificial terms in which the work of Christ is clothed in the Scriptures. To get the sacrificial Christ out of the category of legal expiation into that of moral power was necessary in order to make good his contention. It is where the doctrine halts to-day, — held back by literalism, by over-stringent views of inspiration, by the not yet ascertained place of sacrifice in the ethnic religions, but chiefly by failure to understand what the writer contended for, namely, moral power; and also by failure to see that Christ, so far as he was related to Judaism, was in the line of the prophets and not of the priests. Bushnell fought his battle at close quarters over the meaning and use of sacrifices. They are "a language faculty," "vehicles of religion," "spiritual word-figures," "altar-forms," but they had their meaning for the people who used them, and were not to them types of Christ, though they have become such, — "in that common, widely general, always rational sense, that all physical objects and relations, taken up as roots of language, are types, and are designed

to be, of the spiritual meanings to be figured by them, or built into spiritual words upon them. A type is, in this view, a natural analogon, or figure, of some mental or spiritual idea; a thing in form to represent, and be the name of, what is out of all physical conditions, and therefore has no form" (p. 458). Christ is a sacrifice, but not a Jewish sacrifice, and while he takes away sin, it is not in the way in which the sacrifices of the altar were thought to take it away. He thus carries the whole matter over into the world of the spirit, — something very necessary to be done, unless Christianity is to be a continuation of Judaism.

Bushnell's theory of language always stood him in good stead; and it was by no means a weak staff to lean upon. It did for him what evolution does for the theologian of to-day, who views Christ not as a type of Jewish sacrifice, but as a final and perfect form of all sacrifice. Bushnell went even deeper, and found the spiritual meaning under all forms of sacrifice. The subject is most ably treated in his essay on "Our Gospel a Gift to the Imagination," perhaps his best minor contribution to theology.<sup>1</sup> "Call the words 'old clothes' then of the Hebrews, putting what contempt we may upon them, still they are such types and metaphors of God's mercy as he has been able to prepare, and Christ is in them as in 'glorious apparel'! No living disciple, having once gotten the sense of these types of the altar, will ever try to get his gospel

<sup>1</sup> *Building Eras.*

out of them and preach it in the common terms of language. Quite as certainly will he never try, having once gotten their meaning, to hold them literally, — Christ made literally sin for us, a literal Lamb, literal sacrifice, bleeding literally for the uses of his blood. But he will want them as the dear interpreters and equivalents of God's mercy in the cross, putting himself before them to read and read again, and drink and drink again, their full divine meanings into his soul. Beholding more truths in their faces than all the contrived theories and speculated propositions of schools, he will stay fast by them, or in them, wanting never to get clear of them, or away from the dear and still more dear impression of their power."

His final and best word on the subject is in the same essay, where he speaks of the "metaphors of the altar."

"Take them as they rise in the apostolic teachings, God's figures for the men of old, in the time then present, and for us in the time now present; then as facts of atoning, now as metaphors of the same; and they will be full of God's meaning, we shall know ourselves atoned once for all by their power. But if we undertake to make a science out of them, and speculate them into a rational theory, it will be no gospel that we make, but a poor dry jargon rather; a righteousness that makes nobody righteous, a justice satisfied by injustice, a mercy on the basis of pay, a penal deliverance that keeps on foot all the penal liabilities. All at-

tempts to think out the cross and have it in dogmatic statement have resulted only in disagreement and distraction. And yet there is a remarkable consent of utterance, we plainly discover, when the cross is preached, as for salvation's sake, in the simple use of the scripture symbols taken all as figures for the time then present."

The first volume closes with a valuable homiletic chapter in which is urged a preaching of Christ's life: "I think it would hardly be possible for a preacher to be too much in the facts of his life" (p. 533). This remark gives both the keynote and unity to his treatise: namely, what he was fond of calling "a first-hand" gospel, Christ in contact with the believer until the power of one is realized in the other, and he is "Christed" through and through; "Christ, the mould of our doctrine, the medium of our prayers, the soul of our liberty, the informing grace and music of our hymns, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (p. 551).

The second volume of "The Vicarious Sacrifice" was written ten years after the publication of the first. It awoke less interest than any other of his treatises. While the first volume, especially the first two parts, stands for a theory of the atonement clearly defined and well recognized in the theological world, the second is regarded as a refinement, and refinements in theology are not now popular, even if they are true. But the growth of this volume is most characteristic.



Bushnell never could let go a subject in which he had become interested. His mind was of a penetrative, exploring character. Wherever he was, in Europe, Cuba, Minnesota, California, he saw all there was to be seen, and worked his way down to the last analysis of whatever was explicable. Had he been an inventor, — and the blood ran in his veins, — the patents would have appeared in rapid succession. Theology, from its nature, admits of endless phases ; and because it is a science, it is always unfolding under the increase of knowledge. Bushnell was through and through a theologian, though not a technical one, and he fulfilled his vocation. “New light” was always coming to him. He cared more for the new than for the old, nor was he careful to preserve a formal harmony between them. More than once he virtually retracted or greatly altered positions he had taken, but, it should be said, generally not with advantage to himself as a thinker. His first contentions usually carried his real convictions, and he gravitated back to them.

We do not mean to imply that the two volumes of “The Vicarious Sacrifice” are at variance. His own word is sufficient on this point. He says: “I recant no one of my denials.” “I still assert the ‘moral view’ of the atonement as before, and even more completely than before.” He describes the genesis of the book as follows: —

“I was writing a discourse on the inquiry, How shall a man be able to entirely and perfectly for-

give his enemy, so as to forever sweeten the bitterness of his wounded feeling and leave no sense of personal revulsion? I cannot give the whole argument here, but it must suffice to say that I was brought squarely down upon the discovery that nothing will ever accomplish the proposed real and true forgiveness, but to make cost in the endeavor, such cost as new-temper and liquefies the reluctant nature. And this making cost will be his propitiation of himself. Why not say this of all moral natures, why not of the Great Propitiation itself?" (vol. ii. p. 12).

He thus comes to his subject in a natural way. The first volume treated "the work of Christ as a reconciling power on man;" he will now treat it on the God-ward side. The human analogy suggests that God forgives as man does, by entering painfully into some experience or work for the offender; this assures him of forgiveness, and that no impediments lie in the way of it. So far in the first volume; in the second, the analogy is carried further and made to cover the alleged fact that one object of a man's suffering for an offender against him is to allay the resentment of his own moral nature against the offense, and thus to make himself propitious or ready to forgive; and it is the knowledge that this has been done that secures power over the offender. Bushnell carries the analogy to God, who in the sufferings of Christ propitiates himself. If this is true "of all moral natures, why not of the Great Propitiation itself?"

He defines his position, as compared with that taken in volume one, as follows : —

"I asserted a propitiation before, but accounted for the word as one by which the disciple objectivizes his own feelings, conceiving that God himself is representatively mitigated or become propitious, because he is himself inwardly reconciled to God. Instead of this, I now assert a real propitiation of God, finding it in evidence from the propitiation we instinctively make ourselves, when we heartily forgive. So if it should be imagined that I now give in to the legal-substitution, legal-satisfaction theory, it will only be true that I assert a scheme of discipline for man, which is contrived to work its own settlement, in being fulfilled and consummated by an obedience in the higher plane of liberty itself.

"I still assert the 'moral view' of the atonement as before, and even more completely than before, inasmuch as I propose to interpret all that is prepared and suffered in the propitiation of God and the justification of men, by a reference to the moral pronouncements of human nature and society ; assuming that nothing can be true of God, or of Christ, which is not true in some sense *more humano*, and is not made intelligible by human analogies. We cannot interpret God, as any one may see, except by what we find in our own personal instincts and ideas" (p. 14).

It will be observed that he strives to keep clear of the legalism he has abjured, and to find the grounds

of his contention, not in contrived theories of justice and forgiveness and satisfaction and the like, but in "human analogies." He thus keeps among the laws "before government," for which he contended at the outset, and in the real world of human life. However it may be with his main point, it is here that the book has substantial value. Whatever is done in this realm is legitimate, but while our author steers fairly clear of legalism, the suspicion arises that but for legalism he would not have laid down his thesis, and that something of its shadow overclouds it. Still, if he errs, it is not legalism that leads him astray, but symbolism, the chief seducer in the world of thought, its necessity and its snare. If given full rein, it drives straight towards pantheism; if too sternly checked, thought takes refuge in its own unwarranted creations that are sure to lack the unity secured by symbol. It was a rule and a passion with Bushnell to think under symbols. Had he not lived in New England, he might have been a pantheist. If he is ever at fault, it is in overworking the apparent likeness of one thing to another, — so much more does he see the likeness than the unlikeness, and not sufficiently perceiving that it is through unlikeness that complexity comes in and prevents the world from becoming a solid uniformity. It is well to be able to perceive symbols; it is better to be able to define their scope. Bushnell himself sees the need of such limitation when he speaks of "the grand analogy,

or almost identity, that subsists between our moral nature and that of God ; so that our moral pathologies and those of God make faithful answer to each other, and He is brought so close to us that almost anything that occurs in the workings or exigencies of our moral instincts may even be expected in his" (p. 35). It is on the strength of this word *almost* that we hesitate to carry a possible feature of human forgiveness into the divine nature to such an extent as to claim that God has need to propitiate himself in order to bring about a full sense of forgiveness. That God suffers with and for men in Christ rests on the broad analogy of Fatherhood, but that He suffers in order to become propitious, or rather by suffering *becomes* propitious, — for this point is guarded on page 53, — is a doubtful feature of the analogy. It seems to detract from simple love, which needs nothing to complete itself, and certainly in God needs nothing to start it into exercise. It savors of the schools and the systems and the schemes rather than of the simple human love that overspreads the life of Christ. This, indeed, Bushnell would have, and fills pages with protests against regarding it in any other light, but he fails to remove the impression.

The book was hailed by his orthodox critics as indicating a return to their ranks, but while yielding them a certain satisfaction, it brought no real gain to the older orthodoxy; it was too full of patripassianism, and the Sabellian flavor still hung

round the writer, notwithstanding his assent to the Nicene phrases. Nor could it be incorporated into the older systems as a working factor; it crowded out more than it brought to them. It is read by his sympathizers with admiration and approval of its side discussions, but it wins little assent to the main point; the currents of thought run in other directions and will not be turned back. In some respects the book is quite modern. Its intense patripassianism, often magnificent in the energy with which it is urged, goes well with the following quotation from a writer who represents a prevalent philosophy, and even suggests whether they do not bring up at the same point of semi-panteism. "Your suffering, just as it is in you, is God's suffering. No chasm divides you from God. He is not remote from you even in his eternity. He is here. His eternity means merely the completeness of his experience. But that completeness is inclusive. Your sorrow is one of the included facts."<sup>1</sup> What Mr. Royce says of God's relation to the evil of suffering, Bushnell would say of his relation to sin; that is, God enters into the very pains of the sinner both by a necessity of his nature, and as a real way of securing power over him. The use made by both authors of the passability of God — one in explaining evil, the other redemption — is interesting in its bearing on Theism, and possibly each serves to "point the way we are going."

In summing up these two volumes we would

<sup>1</sup> Professor Josiah Royce, *Studies of Good and Evil*, p. 26.

say that their value consists in a clear and forceful presentation of “the moral view” of the atonement. Bushnell domiciled it in the religious thought of the day, and saved it from utter loss by recasting it in the terms of human experience. It is a view of the atonement that deepens and strengthens life at every point. Its central idea is that it puts the believer directly into the very process by which Christ became a redeemer, and is saving the world; that Christ does nothing for a man beyond what the man himself is required to do for other men, and that it is exactly at this point that the world is redeemed; — the principles underlying salvation are of “universal obligation.” It is also at this point that the nature of man as a son of God is fulfilled, and he becomes one with God. It is by suffering himself to be drawn into the life of Christ, and by sharing it in every phase and particular, that he becomes one with Christ and one with God; it is thus that Fatherhood and sonship are fully established. The older views did not exclude these moral processes, but by making the atonement an expiation or a penal satisfaction, they could secure them only as incidental accompaniments rendered out of gratitude and sense of duty. But “the moral view” makes life consist in them; turns them into saving forces that are one with the saving energy of Christ himself. And it is a reasonable view because it is the supreme expression of what is going on in the every-day processes of human life.

The first volume, which carries the main force of his contention, was written during the civil war for the Union. His mind played back and forth between the tragedy of the Cross and that which was going on in the battlefields of the country, and he saw that each was "grounded in principles of universal obligation," and therefore had saving power. He identified the atonement with human life and history, instead of separating it from them as other theories of the atonement had done. To have brought this truth out of its manifold perversions and made it what it was in the beginning, and what it will be so long as it is an actual redemption, is an achievement in theology that belongs to the first order of intellectual greatness.

The criticism called out by the first volume was severer than that visited on any previous book. Outside of New England, the condemnation was total. From the penal view to the moral was too long a step for the Presbyterian critics to take. The most notable and perhaps ablest review appeared in the "New Englander" (vol. xxv. 1866, p. 228). After more than fifty pages of close yet always generous criticism of Bushnell's "oversights and errors," turning chiefly on propitiation, the writer closes with these remarkable words: "No one can be named who has taken nobler and more comprehensive views of the completeness of Christ for every exigency which he recognizes. No one can conceive more vividly the tenderness, the sublimity, the subduing and constraining power of



his self-sacrificing and vicarious love. No one certainly can draw out by a finer analysis the workings of that love upon the soul of man to purify and humble, to elevate and ennoble, to sanctify and save his ruined nature. 'It is singular,' remarks an acute critic in a private letter, 'that men who, like Bushnell and Robertson, reject the full import of the death of Christ, should make Christ a far more living and effective power than the majority of those who receive it. It is singular, yet, it must be confessed, it is true.' " Why, indeed? Nothing could more clearly show the need of a new conception of the atonement in place of that supposed to state "the full import of the death of Christ" than this naïve confession of its weakness, as held by the majority, in comparison with that which is asserted to be defective. It raises a question as to the relative value of a scientifically correct theology as compared with an effective gospel. It is not too much to say that Bushnell and Robertson preached the Christ who is now accepted by the majority of intelligent believers in Great Britain and America, and the reason is that stated by the "acute critic." In the practical world it would have the force of a surrender; but the theological world of that day was not practical; it insisted on scientific correctness, whatever became of the sinner.



## **CHAPTER XV**

### **SERMONS**

"All light of life for us disappears from the life of Christ unless that life be to us a life indeed, and not the mere acting of an assigned part." — JOHN MCLEOD CAMPBELL, *Nature of the Atonement*, p. 228.

"The gospel is nothing now any more than it was at the first unless it is reincarnated, and kept incarnate." — BUSHNELL, *Living Subjects*, p. 94.

"A right mind has a right polarity, and discovers right things by feeling after them." — *Ibid.*, p. 173.

"O what worlds-full of great feeling are given to us, if only we can die into the causes of the worlds!" — *Ibid.*, p. 412.

"Man finds his paradise when he is imparadised in God." — BUSHNELL, *Sermons for the New Life*, p. 41.

## CHAPTER XV

### SERMONS

AN able and sympathetic critic has said of Bushnell that "the designation of a theologian cannot, in any technical sense at all events, be applied to him."<sup>1</sup> Whatever truth there may be in this remark lies in the fact that he was pre-eminently a preacher, and a preacher is seldom a technical theologian. In Bushnell the preacher absorbed the theologian and supplanted his methods. It is as a preacher that he first comes before us, and henceforth whatever he says bears the sermonic stamp. His treatises had their origin in the pulpit, and in this fact lies their chief value, and also something of their weakness. They will not always be read, nor is it necessary that they should be in order to perpetuate his thought; it is found in its truest and most vital forms in the sermons. They are a court of appeal when the treatise falters or goes amiss in its unnecessary logic; the heart of the matter is to be found in those utterances which came from him as he looked straight into the lives of the people and preached the gospel to them "first hand." He was dominated and inspired by his profession, and he did not

<sup>1</sup> Rev. S. S. Drew, *Contemporary Review*, August, 1879, p. 823.

well know how to speak in any other way. He was not only a great preacher, but he was great at the outset, and the designation never was amiss. Whatever came from him bore the unfailing mark of his best qualities, — insight, comprehension, power of statement. When he preached his first sermon, some one said: "There is more where that came from." The sermon "Duty not measured by our own Ability," in which he flanked each wing of the contending factions of the day, was written in the first year of his ministry, and it might have been written in the last. His first printed sermon, called out by the mobbing of Garrison in Boston in 1835, wears the statesmanlike cast that marks all of his sermons on political topics; they are always discussions of principles and tendencies, and invariably reveal an insight into causes.

His manner in the pulpit at this period is thus described: —

"His preaching had in those days a fiery quality, an urgency and willful force, which, in his later style, is still felt in the more subdued glow of poetic imagery. There was a nervous insistence about his person, and a peculiar emphasizing swing of his right arm from the shoulder, which no one who has ever heard him is likely to forget. It seemed as if, with this gesture, he swung himself into his subject, and would fain carry others along with him. His sermons were always written out in full and read; never extemporized, never mem-

orized. For the latter method and its results he had no liking. For the former, not sufficient confidence, though that came to him later, when driven to extempore work by ill-health. His early manner betrayed this want of confidence, and was at times a little constrained and labored. The same was true of his prayers, which lacked ease and flow, such as came to him with fuller inspiration. The whole effect of his services was, however, always pointed and practical. Prayers, hymns, Scripture reading, text, sermon, all converged on the same central theme, and went to heighten the impression of the leading thought."

A closer description of his preaching, at an early period, is given by Charles Loring Brace, whose life illustrated the influence he describes : —

"The writer holds it among the especial blessings of his life that his boyhood and youth were passed under the pastorate of Dr. Bushnell. Those were the eager and powerful days of the great preacher, when his language had a pure and Saxon ring which it somewhat lost in later years, when emotions from the depths of a passionate nature bore him sometimes to the highest flights of eloquence, and wit and sarcasm flashed from his talk and speeches, and he stood the most independent and muscular sermonizer in the American pulpit. He reached afterwards a higher plane of spiritual life, and showed more balanced power and more consideration for the views of others, and was no doubt more humble minded, and yet

more elevated above the world ; still those early fiery days of his left an indelible mark on all the youth who came under his influence. We felt the divine beauty of Truth, and how sweet and easy it was to sacrifice all to her. We were withdrawn from the overpowering control of external formulæ and formal statements, and began to search for the realities as for hidden treasures. Our great teacher seemed to stand as a prophet, directing us to things unseen and eternal ; and though perhaps he and his disciples at that time exaggerated the value of the intellect, it was a healthful movement, and always inspired with devout reverence and a deep sense of the personality of Christ as the Son of God. Truth, independence, humanity, under an overpowering faith in God and Christ, were the principles stamped then into youthful minds by the preaching and life of Dr. Bushnell. He showed himself in all his intercourse, what he was, a large pattern of a man. Proud, at times almost disdainful ; full of powerful feelings ; simple ; witty ; tender as a woman to real misfortune, but biting in his sarcasm against pomposity and falseness ; self-willed, thoroughly independent, a true leader of men."

It must not be inferred that Bushnell was what is usually called a popular preacher. Men of the first order of intellect seldom win that name ; they are both unwilling and unable to bridge the chasm between themselves and the throng. He always had a hearing, but the audience was determined



by the severest selection.<sup>1</sup> He drew, but only such as had ears to hear him. He was impatient with half-way thinking, and his genius was cast in too rigid a mould to admit of accommodation to the populace. His brilliancy and fervor flashed and burned at too great a distance to be discerned by the multitude, and the orbit of his thought was too vast for it to measure. He can be fully appreciated only by those who heard him preach. Sermons and delivery fitted each other like die and image. The sincerity of the word was matched by the quiet confidence of his bearing, and the poetry of his diction was sustained by the music of his voice, which always fell into a rhythmic cadence. The flights of his imagination were not rhetorical strivings, but the simple rehearsals of what he saw. He was always more conscious of the God-ward than the man-ward side of his subject. His early conception of God as enshrined in Christ followed him to the end, and it was the divine rather than the human that entranced him. He was eminently an interpreter of the divine mysteries, and he brought with him the air and the bearing of the region into which he had penetrated. His effectiveness was peculiar. If he gained any hearing at all, he won the consent of the whole man, — not agreement always, but intellectual and moral sympathy. The sermon never

<sup>1</sup> Professor George Adam Smith said — *in colloquio* — that Bushnell is the preacher's preacher, as Spenser is the poet's poet, and that his sermons are on the shelves of every manse in Scotland.

lost its power to move and inspire such hearers through lapse of years. He lodged so vast an amount of truth in heart and mind and conscience that it could not be forgotten. Its staying power was due also to the fact that, though speaking from such a height and never descending an inch to catch the ear, there was an utter absence of the *ex cathedra* and even of the theologic tone. He was the most democratic and the most human of preachers, and at the same time one of the loftiest and most spiritual. He spoke to men as on equal terms and in a direct way, taking them into his confidence and putting himself in their place, feeling their needs, sharing their doubts, and reasoning the question out as one of them. He never berates, and if he exhorts, it is in the same spirit of comradeship over the matter in hand. Still, he is dominated by his subject and its demands, following where it goes, and if any of his hearers falter, he does not stop with them, but leads the rest on to the final solution, or up to the last look into the mystery.

One of the most noticeable things about the sermons is the relation between text and title. When they have been announced, he has already half preached the sermon. The title is not a happy hint nor a catching phrase, but is the subject itself in little. He starts with a full conception of his discourse, not working his way into it, but working it out, having already gone through it. Hence it is not a tentative groping after the truth, but the

truth itself, in brief but clear proportions. The title of the first discourse in "Sermons for the New Life" — "Every Man's Life a Plan of God" — contains his whole thought on the subject. It took a great truth out of dialectic theology, where it deadened action, and made it a living force. It was not a great sermon as compared with some others, but was great because of its timeliness and the shrewdness of its address. The text — "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me" — matched the title, each piquing interest and forcing attention. Equally striking is the title of the third sermon, "Dignity of Human Nature shown from its Ruins." It is not one of his best, and is somewhat cumbered by dogmatic views of the Fall, which, however, he soon forgets in a first-hand view of that side of human life where dignity is not usually looked for. "The Capacity of Religion extirpated by Disuse;" here an old and much debated doctrine is taken out of its dogmatic setting and put into life itself, where it is clearly seen to be an every-day fact. "Unconscious Influence," with its allusive text, "Then went in also that other disciple," was preached and first published in London in 1846, where it must have caught the eye of Robertson, who in a letter speaks of the subject and text, but without mention of the author.<sup>1</sup> It might be named along

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Henry Clay Trumbull, in an interesting series of papers on Bushnell in the *S. S. Times* (August, 1899), refers to an absurd controversy over the question of plagiarism by Robertson. Bushnell dismissed the question by saying: —

with "Every Man's Life a Plan of God," a prolific sermon, having called out innumerable discourses on the same subject and bearing fruit beyond measure. In the sermon on "Happiness and Joy," he fixes the distinction between them, and in the sermon on "The Power of an Endless Life" turns the mind away from duration to the moral power to live and grow spiritually. That on "The Efficiency of the Passive Virtues" was greatly needed at a time when the newly felt freedom of the will made life overtense with action.

In the next volume, "Christ and his Salvation," the most notable discourse is that on "The Insight of Love," based on the anointing of Jesus. The first sentence challenges attention: "It takes a woman disciple after all to do any most beautiful thing; in certain respects too, or as far as love is wisdom, any wisest thing." After an exquisitely tender and beautiful unfolding of the text, he passes to a discussion of casuistry, — very timely when literalness was the rule of conduct as it was of interpretation, — and then to the "superior preceptive morality of the Gospel of Christ,"

"Robertson was too much of a man for that. He did n't need to do such a thing. There was no temptation to him to appropriate another man's ideas in that way."

"How, then, do you account for all this?"

"I suppose that Robertson read a report of that sermon in the newspaper, one morning soon after I had preached it, and he liked the plan; but then it practically went out of his mind. Later its ideas came back to him in such a way that he thought he was originating them, when he was unconsciously recalling them from his memory."

which is "incarnated in his person, — all beauty, truth, mercy, greatness, wise counsel of life," and supersedes all casuistry so that one who embraces him "is able to fill up a beautiful life and meet, with a glorious consent of practice, all the grandest meanings and remotest future workings of God." This sermon is a remarkable example of refined discussion put to every-day use, — the highest art in the preacher, and almost the measure of his power. That on "The Fasting and Temptation of Jesus" — the crucial subject in all preaching — shows Bushnell at his best. Thought, feeling, insight, sympathy, — all are at the highest. Save a few sentences touching on our "fallen nature," the treatment anticipates the latest exegesis, and has no equal in its passionate and clear-sighted conception of this experience in the life of Jesus. It is a fine illustration of nearly all his sermons, — correct enough in exegesis, not because of critical study, but by pure insight and reproduction of events in his imagination. The sermon on "The Wrath of the Lamb" has in it more of technical theology than most of his discourses; still it is marked by his usual clearness of vision. The reader is left in uncertainty as to his meaning on certain points, but not as to the general purport. It is sufficiently clear until he suffers his subject to lead him into the prevalent theology, against which he deals heavy blows, while he does not wholly make evident his own view; but the sermon should live, and be read

as a moral tonic, and a reminder of the strenuousness of life under the eternal laws.

The third volume, "Sermons on Living Subjects," goes on in the same fashion, — incarnating a theme in a title and binding it fast to a text. The most notable titles are "Feet and Wings;" "The Gospel of the Face;" "Loving is but letting God love us;" "The Outside Saints;" "Free to Amusements, and too free to want them."

Valuable as the sermons of Bushnell are to all who read them, they are of special value to the teacher of homiletics. As he studies them, searching for the art that lends such power to the thought, he notes first their structural quality, — built, not thrown together, nor gathered up here and there. He traces the intertwined rhetoric and logic, each tempering the other, — the reasoning little except clear statement and the rhetoric as convincing as the logic. He follows the wide sweep of the thought which yet never wanders from the theme. He notes the Platonic use of the world as furnishing images of spiritual realities; and a kindred habit of condensing his meaning into apothegms that imbed themselves in the memory. He shows how the preacher begins by almost sharing a doubt with his hearer and leaves him wondering why he ever doubted; how theology is transformed into religion which becomes the judge of theology; and how while the whole sermon is instinct with thought and sentiment, it is practical down even to homeliest details; — this

and more the teacher will point out to his students, but he has not compassed the preacher, nor can he measure these discourses by any analysis. They have that which defies analysis, — genius, the creative faculty, the gift of direct vision. Something in almost every sermon is to be set aside, — defective exegesis, fanciful interpretation of nature, provincial prejudice, lingering dogma, over-emphasis, — but after this is done, there remains the body of the discourse, marked by that peculiar insight that sees straight into the nature of things, and by that gift of expression which can utter what it sees; each gift reinforcing the other.

It is impossible to form a just estimate of Bushnell's preaching without taking into account that of the day. It was a style of preaching in which nature and life were fairly driven off the field. There was no such thing as a direct look. Everything was viewed through four or five dominant doctrines that prescribed the thought, whatever might be the subject. The Fall gave the keynote, and a constant warning rang in the ears of preacher and people; fear of unsoundness and the "system" determined the conclusion. The themes were great, but the assumptions and the method determined in advance what was to be said. Sometimes the argument wandered into by-paths of thought and even sentiment, and sometimes the preacher ran a wild chase in imaginary regions and was deemed eloquent, but for the most part he followed a beaten path to a fixed

goal, marked out by proof-texts on one side, and by the system on the other side. There was no full look at life and its conditions, no rational analysis of motives and conduct; nothing was viewed in its own light. The condition, in one word, was a lack of freedom, aggravated by an intense provincialism. Bushnell broke into this treadmill world and reversed its method. He did not ignore dogma, but he would not allow it to prejudge his conclusion; nor did he fail to quote proof-texts, but he used them chiefly as helps in the examination of his subject. For that he struck straight into the heart of things, — life as he himself and those about him were living it, and nature as it lay under his eye.

If the question were raised as to the theological significance of his sermons as a whole, it would be difficult to give a clear answer; but this much may be said, — they reinforce the general purport of his four theological treatises, and translate their main contentions into terms of every-day life. Treatises and sermons have as their common and chief result a transfer of thought in New England theology from the atonement, viewed under two or three theories, to the incarnation; that is, from a dogmatic conception of Christ's death to a natural conception of his life. The change was inevitable in the evolution of theology; Bushnell led the way, and made it clear and open. The question asked to-day in the earnest world is not, Why did Christ die? but, How did he live? The incarnation has taken into itself the atonement.



More specific mention of this change is made elsewhere, and is spoken of here to illustrate the fact that by bringing the atonement under the terms of human life, and by making it a fulfillment of the laws of humanity, which are also the laws of God, he carried it directly into the incarnation, that is, the human life of Christ. It does not matter whether Bushnell inclined to the Sabelian or the Nicene view, something stronger than either drove him along his path; namely, the conviction that if God is in Christ, it is in order to fulfill himself under the laws and conditions of humanity. This essential transition in theological thought is clearly seen in Bushnell's sermons. It permeates them, and makes them what they are. His theological treatises will be read less and less as time goes on. Theology is a science, and science is a Saturn that is always devouring its own children; but these sermons belong to that other class of literature which has been called "the literature of power" because it deals with the unchangeable factors and conditions of humanity. No sermons have a better claim to be ranked in this class, and it may be expected that they will live on in the world of literature, along with those of Bishop Butler and Mozley and Newman, with hardly less weight of matter, and with even deeper insight into the ways of the spirit, both of God and man. They are universal, and yet they especially reflect the New England mind as a combination of ideality, conscience, and practicality, the last dominating

the others, though in subtle and subordinate ways. They are timeless in their truth, majestic in their diction, commanding in their moral tone, penetrating in their spirituality, and are pervaded by that quality without which a sermon is not one, — the divine uttering itself to the human. There is no striving and crying in the streets, no heckling of saints nor dooming of sinners, no petty debates over details of conduct, no dogmatic assumption, no logical insistence, but only the gentle and mighty persuasions of truth, coming as if breathed by the very spirit of God. He illustrates on every page the remark of his teacher, Professor Gibbs, that "language is the sanctuary of thought." These sermons are the worship he paid in that temple where reason and devotion are one.

The writer supplements his own insufficient account of the preaching of Bushnell by a graphic pen-picture from the Rev. Dr. David N. Beach.

"In the academic year 1870-71, at Yale, the College Pastorate having just become vacant, and there being no immediate intention of filling it, President Woolsey, who had a year in advance announced his intention of laying down his office at the next Commencement, provided for the college pulpit an extraordinary feast of good things. It was the modern 'Board of Preachers' without the name. Among the eminent men whom he, with consummate discernment, brought hither, none, however, so shone as himself and Dr. Bushnell, each of whom preached on several Sundays. The

difference between no two men could have been greater, and it afforded our student world a reassuring glimpse of how wide-lying the kingdom of truth is, to perceive that minds so diverse in aptitude, training, and method, stood, nevertheless, in the most evident and heartfelt sympathy. The compact, weighty, simple, profound thought of Woolsey, immensely in earnest, building toward faith but more toward conduct; and the vision, the scope, the uplift of Bushnell, his seership, as of an Elijah already beyond Jordan (it was almost his last preaching), and talking with some Elisha, are fixed forever in the minds and lives of not a few who then sat, morning and afternoon (for so was it in those days), in that grim old chapel.

“Hunting through a file of our college newspaper for that year, I find that, under the title, ‘How does he do it?’ I essayed to answer the unanswerable about Bushnell (Yale Courant, January 18, 1871, pp. 129, 130). It is a poor little article, missing almost altogether the point, but still a token how our seer had laid hold on us, and glistening with great Bushnell phrases. For example: ‘Doubt is not occasioned by investigation, but by the lack of it;’ ‘Scorn is blind, for the eyes it thinks it has are only sockets.’ Nothing could have been more Bushnellian — at least as, like an apparition, he appeared before us on those Sundays — than those two words, ‘only sockets.’ Pretty much all our illuminations seemed ‘only sockets’ — sockets of a skeleton — when he would

have done ; and we found ourselves looking far away to that light which never was on sea or land. Days of fate — like one of his own he told us of, ‘ in a little bedroom of one of these dormitories ’ — were those to some of us. But to be more specific : Gaunt was he, gray, ashen of skin, thin-voiced till he got under way, stopping time and again to cough, no elocution, nor rhetoric (albeit scarce ever such rhetoric, soberly conceived) ; making us his by no *ad captandum* themes or illustrations, or metaphors ; the plainest, most matter of fact person that ever stood there. His invocation, which we could scarcely hear, would still us. The Scripture lesson, plain speech (as if uttered on yesterday’s half holiday) about some valiant soul, read as only one reads who dwells forever with realities, would change our temper for the entire day. Then the prayer. I can hear it yet. Nothing about Bushnell so holds me, though I cannot recall a sentence of it. You deemed, like Jacob at Bethel, that God was there. All conventions, too, were dissolved betwixt Him and you. Our seer must have held Him with his glittering eye. Then the great argument began, — a shorter ‘ pastoral prayer ’ than we had ever heard, that spake to the Infinite as a man to his friend ; reverent but familiar ; grateful but self-respecting ; diction the simplest, the weightiest ; hesitating not to assume for us responsibilities, nor to lay answering responsibilities on God ; (you divined, now, how it was that Jacob had wrestled

at Face-of-God, and had successfully thrown down his gauntlet before Jehovah ;) and done, as all straight, pregnant speech is done, soon, simply, confidently. The world has changed when you lift your head. To have heard Bushnell pray, and to have prayed even a very little with him, was already to have entered the world of spirit. Our Saviour's unique prayer life was explicable thereafter.

"The sermon I remember best, better than all except that 'On the Mount,' was the one entitled 'The Dissolving of Doubts.' 'Doubts are not peculiar to Nebuchadnezzar,' he begins, putting into that monarch's lips words belonging to Belshazzar (and it so stands in the printed volume); but if you notice this, you do not mind, any more than you mind Shakespeare's anachronisms. No, they are not peculiar to Nebuchadnezzar; you even have had yours. Thereupon, in the space of some three coarsely printed pages, say in five minutes, he has given you what an earlier metaphysician would have called the 'natural history' of your own mind. Then, while you sit breathless, he describes whither you are come. 'His suns do not rise, but climb.' Next he proposes a way out. It appeals to you the more because he shyly implies that he has tried it himself. Here occurs the parenthesis about the 'little bedroom.' 'O God, if there be a God,' he quotes, and you take heart. 'A dismal sort of prayer,' he comments, while you whisper Amens, 'but the best he can

make, and better than some.' The tears by this time are streaming down your face, but you sit bolt upright on those timber benches, not fearing, at least for now, the face of man. But it is his application that lifts you. 'Never be afraid to doubt.' 'Never try to conquer doubts against time.' 'Never force yourself to believe.' 'If you try this way, you must be anything that it requires, a Jew, a Mohammedan, ready to go to the world's end, anything; most probably you must be a Christian.' All this with a calm, a stillness, a solemnity of emphasis, a cheerful confidence in you and in God, that by this time have bathed that sombre place as in a soft and warm and heavenly light. The president, who sits beside him in the high pulpit, and who will rather have chosen the theme, 'Sin not Self-Reformatory,' lifts his glasses to clear the mists that are even in his piercing eyes, and you walk out into a new, an unfearing, a believing life.

"This was the peculiarity of Bushnell's preaching: it was vision, it was pure insight, it changed your point of view, you were another man. Shortly before the death of Thomas Hughes, I heard him say in his own library at Chester, before an exquisite portrait of Maurice, his voice tremulous with an emotion that almost bowed that strong man, 'Oh, he was the prophet, he was the prophet!' You felt the same about Bushnell."

## **CHAPTER XVI**

### **ESSAYS AND ADDRESSES**

"A theologian needs to know the life and spirit of his own time. Theology has often been viewed with prejudices and distrust, because it was supposed to be a study of recluses or moral specialists, who lived apart from the life of their age, and whose conclusions needed correcting in the light of wider thought and larger experience. Such impressions are not wholly false, and in so far as they are correct, theology cannot complain if it is distrusted. It may seem as if a man might successfully study the themes of theology in the solitude of a recluse; but the thinking of recluses tends to abstraction, over-systematizing, and neglect of the practical aspects of truth. Theology is the science of religion, and religion is a life. Surely the science of the richest life is entitled to the benefit of health, vigor, and open air. In order to success in theology, a man should be sensitive to life, and able to think in sympathy with the living thought around him. He should be ready to attend to the practical side of his theme, and capable of strong, practical views. All the more should he be in touch with life because theology is not a stationary science. It has always changed with the changing life of successive generations, and can never cease to do so. Therefore a theologian must needs have heard the voice of his own generation, and be able to live in sympathy with the Christian life that must send its vigor into his science. Theology stagnates when it is cut off from present life and thinking and has its sources wholly in the past, and the theologian's mind is the channel through which the fresh stream must flow in." — WILLIAM NEWTON CLARKE, D. D., *Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 57.



## CHAPTER XVI

### ESSAYS AND ADDRESSES

BUSHNELL published four treatises on theology: "Christian Nurture," "God in Christ" (which may be regarded as embracing "Christ in Theology"), "Nature and the Supernatural," and "The Vicarious Sacrifice." In addition there are three volumes of sermons and four of addresses and essays. The first volume of the latter, — "Work and Play," — from a purely literary point of view, is to be regarded as his best. Of the first essay, which gives the title, Dr. Bartol said years after its delivery: "For originality, simplicity, and splendor, either as spoken or on the written page, it has scarce, if ever, been surpassed in the land;" a strong word when it is remembered that the best utterances of the greatest men of the country have been made in the form of addresses on similar occasions. Still, the verdict will stand. It has much in common with two of Emerson's essays, — that on "The Method of Nature" and the address before the Divinity School. Each writer carries his theme along the path of nature into the world of the spirit, but the tread of Bushnell is firmer and his world is less elusive. His essay is sub-

stantially a plea for the poet's conception of life, in which work that is "activity *for* an end" becomes play that is "activity *as* an end." "One prepares the fund or resources of enjoyment, the other is enjoyment itself." This he regards as the true end and destiny of man. Taking the leading forms of human activity which as work are "counterfeits of play," he lifts them into the world of the spirit, where "life is its own end and joy." There is little originality in the idea; it is the clearness and splendor of the treatment that give to the essay its significance. One does not pass by this essay as vague or over-fine, but rather is held to it by the very force of its concreteness. The conviction of the prophet blends with the insight of the poet. The play of his imagination becomes a message and a call, and one reads the closing sentences feeling that what is described may be actually realized.

"Therefore I can easily persuade myself, that, if the world were free, — free, I mean, of themselves, — brought up, all, out of work into the pure inspiration of truth and charity, new forms of personal and intellectual beauty would appear, and society itself reveal the Orphic movement. No more will it be imagined that poetry and rhythm are accidents or figments of the race, one side of all ingredient or ground in nature. But we shall know that poetry is the real and true state of man, the proper and last ideal of souls, the free beauty they long for, and the rhythmic flow of that universal play in which all life would live" (p. 5).

"The Growth of Law," an address given before the Alumni of Yale College in 1843, has special interest as containing probably the first correct statement made in the country of the relation of the Mosaic law to slavery; namely, that of "permissive statutes" which had no "permanent significance" and were "liable to be superseded" under the growth, or, as would now be said, the evolution of law. The point is of interest exegetically and politically. Slavery was a burning question at the time, and all opinions upon it ran to extremes. It was defended as a "divine institution" because it was recognized by the laws of Moses. This was not denied, and the abolitionists, who put their question above every other, felt themselves driven into a quasi or real infidelity. Bushnell's assertion that slavery was unquestionably a part of the Mosaic law, but was subject to elimination under the growth of moral sentiments, had at that time no place in public thought. The Northern pulpits were silent, and the Southern, having the better of the argument according to the exegesis which both accepted, kept them so. Twenty years later (1863), Professor Goldwin Smith published a pamphlet in which he took the same ground, but not until the sword was taking vengeance on false exegesis. Bushnell's address is remarkable in many ways. It anticipated Maine and other writers on human society in making it an evolution upon a moral basis and having a moral end. There was at the time little or no science to uphold him;

there was as yet no theory of the world, nor of progress, except one resting on the will of God or on human effort. That he should have struck out one that science afterward elaborated from countless data, and put under it the theological purpose which science has reluctantly accorded, is remarkable. Emerson also had a like vision, but his utterance of it was a sibylline leaf; Bushnell put his in the form of a treatise which is still a teaching.

“The Founders Great in their Unconsciousness,” an address before the New England Society of New York (1849), reveals how deeply he was bedded in Puritan thought, and how thoroughly he apprehended its secret. It is regarded as one of the best of many great addresses upon the Pilgrim Fathers:—

“Coming in simple duty, duty was their power, — a divine fate in them, whose thrusting on to greatness and triumphant good took away all questions from the feeble arbitrament of their will, and made them even impassible to their burdens. And they went on building their unknown future, the more resolutely because it was unknown. For, though unknown, it was present in its power, — present, not as in their projects and wise theories, but as a latent heat, concealed in their principles, and works, and prayers, and secret love, to be given out and become palpable in the world’s cooling, ages after” (p. 127).

The student of Bushnell will not pass by the essay on “Life, or the Lives.” It is a beautiful

excursion into the region of nature and its living forms, touched here and there by the semi-panthéism that lends a constant charm to his thought, and running over with hints and allusions that are elsewhere wrought into his theological work, especially in "Nature and the Supernatural." Nature, when properly studied, that is, in its lives as well as in its forms, "becomes a circle of joyous life."

"Things above sense, the reverend mysteries of God and religion, now throng about the man, firing his imagination and challenging a ready faith. Having passed within the rind of matter, and by its mechanical laws, and discovered there a more potent, multitudinous, self-active world of life, his higher affinities are wakened, drawing him away to the common Father, whose life is in him, as in them, and to those meditations of the future otherwise faint and dim in their evidence. Or if, perchance, he remembers that all these creatures die and are no more, a feeling is by this time generated, which can no more be chilled, of his own self-asserting immortality. So that when the autumnal frosts have changed the world's green look, and the pale nations of the forest leaves hang withering, or fly their stems, loosened by the windy blasts, he will call them with the poet, 'pestilence stricken multitudes,' and the sympathy yielded to the drooping spirits of creation will only have softened his own, preparing that gentleness in him which belongs both to faith and to genius. But the courage of his immortality stays firm, for

well he knows that when the green myrmidons of spring appear to gladden again the earth, it will be to him as the opening of the gate 'Beautiful' over all graves, and that, being now a life again among the lives of May, singing with them that sing, and rejoicing in the new-born joy of all, it will only be his impulse to say, what before he believed, — The resurrection and the life" (p. 312).

There is much in this essay that reminds one of Edwards, who, had he not been the first theologian of his age, might have become its greatest naturalist. He seems to be in entire accord with Bushnell, who makes "the whole universe of nature a perfect analogon of the whole universe of thought or spirit," when he says that "the Son of God created the world for this very end, to communicate Himself in an image of His own excellency," — not absolutely, but "a sort of a shadow or glimpse of His excellencies to bodies which . . . are but the shadows of beings and not real beings."<sup>1</sup>

Many of these essays reveal Bushnell as a publicist of the first order. No man of his day handled those questions of state that involved the moral sense of the people with such breadth of view and such fidelity, both to the nation and to conscience, as are displayed in many a sermon and address from 1837 to the very end of his life. His attitude on the slavery question was almost unique,

<sup>1</sup> See quotation in Allen's *Life of Edwards*, p. 355, a passage of remarkable beauty and significance.

and on some points absolutely so, as we have seen, standing as he did on nearly unoccupied ground between the party of compromise and that of abolition, true to the Union, but true also to anti-slavery, and pointing out the path for each. His conception of the nation was very like that of Dr. Mulford, — “a divine organism,” an idea to which his theology easily lent itself. Hence all the greatness and force of his professional thought, along with his Puritan instincts and immeasurable earnestness and massive common sense, went into discourses and addresses which, more than any other utterances of the day, interpreted and outlined the providential history of the nation for a period of thirty years.

We cannot illustrate by quotation, and only name such papers as “The True Wealth and Weal of Nations,” “The Growth of Law,” “The Founders Great in their Unconsciousness,” “Historical Estimate of Connecticut,” “The Doctrine of Loyalty,” “The Day of Roads,” “City Plans,” “Common Schools,” “Popular Government by Divine Right,” “Our Obligations to the Dead,” “Barbarism the First Danger.” The last-named paper has hardly been equaled in the country for effective results because of the impulse it gave to home missions and to the founding of Christian colleges in the West, — the two forces which beyond all others have prevented a lapse into barbarism. “The Oregon Question,” written and published in London, maintained in the face of heated

public opinion the American claims as to boundary, on grounds that came to be accepted. Along with these, and of the same general tenor, are the following sermons, published only as pamphlets: "A Discourse on the Slavery Question;" "American Politics;" "Politics under the Law of God;" "Prosperity our Duty;" "The Northern Iron," a war sermon; "Society and Religion," preached in and for California; "A Sermon to the Business Men of Hartford," one of many that served to train up a set of men in that city who have greatly contributed to its prosperity; and "Reverses Needed," a sermon telling them how to endure financial disaster. Two of these papers — "Historical Estimate of Connecticut," and "Our Obligations to the Dead," an oration in honor of the Alumni of Yale College who fell in the War of the Rebellion — will always be remembered and quoted, — one as a revelation of the commonwealth to itself in all that is worthiest in its history, and the other for its political wisdom, early gained, and its tribute to the dead whom it enshrines in tender and noble eulogy, "sanctified by an enduring record." It is in striking accord with Lincoln's address at Gettysburg, both being keyed to the note of sacrifice rather than of heroism: —

"No, no, ye living! It is the ammunition spent that wins the battle, not the ammunition brought off from the field. These dead are the spent ammunition of the war, and theirs, above all, is the



victory. Upon what, indeed, turned the question of the war, but on the dead that could be furnished; or, what is in no wise different, the life that could be contributed for that kind of expenditure? These grim heroes, therefore, dead and dumb, that have strewed so many fields with their bodies, — these are the price and purchase-money of our triumph. A great many of us were ready to live, but these offered themselves, in a sense, to die, and by their cost the victory is won.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Henry Clay Trumbull, in his papers on Bushnell in the *S. S. Times* (August 12, 1899), speaks of the occasion as follows: —

“When, at the close of the war, Yale College, his alma mater, honored her many soldier sons by a commemorative celebration, Dr. Bushnell was invited to deliver the oration. It seemed to me that he was never grander than on that occasion. The armies were not yet disbanded, but from many fields and posts officers and men came to share in the impressive services of that day. Starred names which the whole nation delighted to honor were there, and officers of every grade in the army and the navy, together with the host of common soldiers of uncommon worth, and dignitaries of church and state, besides the ordinary college assembly, made up an inspiring audience.

“The Doctor was himself the central figure of the hour, not merely because of his position, but by his character and mental and moral power. He stood there like an inspired prophet of old to give his message and to bear his witness. He had, in one sense, been in more battles than any veteran before him. His face and figure showed scars that came of conflicts with intellectual and spiritual giants. And in his countenance was the clear light of assured triumph in faith. All present looked up to him with admiration and reverence. But the temptation to speak words of praise and honor to the heroes before him had no power to swerve him from his duty of pointing all to the recognition of ‘Our Obligations to the Dead.’ He uplifted himself, and he uplifted his hearers, as he pointed away from the noblest of the living to the nobler dead who had died for them.”

"The Age of Homespun" will probably be longer remembered and oftener quoted than any other writing of Bushnell, because it is so true a picture of rural New England life in the early part of the century. The invitation to preach the sermon at the Centennial Celebration of Litchfield County (August 14, 1851) came to him soon after the publication of "Christ in Theology," and he gladly turned away from the turmoil it awoke to the memories of "days of victorious health, sound digestion, peaceful sleep, and youthful spirits." The discourse is an outburst of grateful recollection of his early life, — pathetic, humorous, photographic in its accuracy, keen in its analysis, reverent and noble in its tone, revealing not more the period it describes than the man himself. We quote but briefly : —

"There is no affectation of seriousness in the assembly, no mannerism of worship; some would say too little of the manner of worship. They think of nothing, in fact, save what meets their intelligence and enters into them by that method. They appear like men who have a digestion for strong meat, and have no conception that trifles more delicate can be of any account to feed the system. Nothing is dull that has the matter in it, nothing long that has not exhausted the matter. If the minister speaks in his greatcoat and thick gloves or mittens, if the howling blasts of winter drive in across the assembly fresh streams of ventilation that move the hair upon their

heads, they are none the less content, if only he gives them good strong exercise. Under their hard, and, as some would say, stolid faces, great thoughts are brewing, and these keep them warm. Free will, fixed fate, foreknowledge absolute, trinity, redemption, special grace, eternity — give them anything high enough, and the tough muscle of their inward man will be climbing sturdily into it; and if they go away having something to think of, they have had a good day. A perceptible glow will kindle in their hard faces, only when some one of the chief apostles, a Day, a Smith, or a Belamy, has come to lead them up some higher pinnacle of thought, or pile upon their sturdy mind some heavier weight of argument — fainting never under any weight, even that which, to the foreign critics of the discourses preached by them and others of their day, it seems impossible for any, the most cultivated audience in the world, to have supported. These royal men of homespun — how great a thing to them was religion ! ” (p. 395.)

The essays on “Pulpit Talent” and “Training for the Pulpit Manward” are among the most useful of his writings. The first should be often read by preachers to reinstate them in the requisites of their profession. Bushnell was the ablest preacher of his day, and the first essay is an unconscious revelation of himself. He discusses the usual “canonical talents,” as he calls them, — “high scholarship; a metaphysical and theological thinking talent; style or talent for expression; and

a talent of manner and voice for speaking." Due acknowledgment is made of the value of these as "cultivable talents," but he regards them with careful discrimination, having an eye on higher qualities.

"It is one of the sad things about book learning that it so easily becomes a limitation upon souls and a kind of dry rot in their vigor. The receptive faculty absorbs the generative, and the scholarship sucks up the manhood. I know not how to put this matter of scholarship better than to say that it needs to be universal; to be out in God's universe; that is, to see and study and know everything, books and men and the whole work of God from the stars downward; to have a sharp observation of war and peace and trade; of animals and trees and atoms; of the weather, and the evanescent smells of the creations; to have bored into society in all its grades and meanings, its manners, passions, prejudices, and times; so that, as the study goes on, the soul will be getting full of laws, images, analogies, and facts, and drawing out all subtlest threads of import to be its interpreters when the preaching work requires. Of what use is it to know the German when we do not know the human? Or to know the Hebrew points when we do not know at all the points of our wonderfully punctuated humanity? A preacher wants a full storehouse of such learning, and then he wants the contents all shut in, so that they can never one of them get out, only as they

leap out, unbidden, to help him and be a language for him. . . .

“There cannot be much preaching worthy of the name where there is no thinking. Preaching is nothing but the bursting out of light, which has first burst in or up from where God is, among the soul’s foundations. And to this end, great and heavy discipline is wanted, that the soul may be drilled into orderly right working. . . .

“An immense overdoing in the way of analysis often kills a sermon. Death itself is a great analyzer, and nothing ever comes out of the analyzing process fully alive. . . .

“True preaching struggles right away from formula, back into fact, and life, and the revelation of God and heaven. I make no objection to formulas; they are good enough in their place, and a certain instinct of our nature is comforted in having some articulations of results thought out to which our minds may refer. Formulas are the jerked meat of salvation, — if not always the strong meat, as many try to think, — dry and portable and good to keep, and when duly seethed and softened, and served with needful condiments, just possible to be eaten; but for the matter of living, we really want something fresher and more nutritious. On the whole, the kind of thinking talent wanted for a great preacher is that which piercingly loves; that which looks into things and through them, ploughing up pearls and ores, and now and then a diamond. It will not seem to go

on metaphysically or scientifically, but with a certain round-about sense and vigor. And the people will be gathered to it because there is a gospel fire burning in it that warms them to a glow. This is power. . . .

“A great many preachers die of style, that is, of trying to soar; when, if they would only consent to go afoot as their ideas do, they might succeed and live. . . .

“Only good and great matter makes a good and great style” (pp. 187-189).

He is doubtful as to the value of training in manner and voice. “It is mostly a natural talent, though it can be modulated and chastened by criticism.” “I have never known a great college declaimer that became a great preacher.” “The artistic air kills everything.” “The greatest fault possible to a speaker is to be absolutely faultless.”

Dismissing the canonical talents, he names others which he considers as more essential. First, “the talent for growth.” He describes those who have it, as follows: —

“Increment is their destiny. Their force makes force. What they gather seems to enlarge their very brain. . . . By and by it begins to be seen that they move. Somebody finally speaks of them. Their sentiments are growing bigger, their opinions are getting weight, ideas are breaking in and imaginations breaking out, and the internal style of their souls, thus lifted, lifts the style of their expression. They at length get the sense of position,

and then a certain majesty of consciousness adds weight to their speech. And finally the wonderful thing about them is that they keep on growing, confounding all expectation, getting all the while more breadth and richness, and covering in their life, even to its close, with a certain evergreen freshness that is admirable and beautiful to behold" (p. 194).

"Passing to the class of talents that are most preëminently preaching talents, I name first the talent of a great conscience or a firmly accentuated moral nature. . . . No great and high authority is possible in a movement on souls, without a great conscience. Principles analytically distinguished and reasoned by the understanding have a tame, weak accent as respects authority, but when they are issued from the conscience, rung as peals by the conscience, they get an attribute of thunder. Like thunder, too, they are asserted by their own mere utterance and the unquestionable authority of their voice" (p. 201).

The analysis of imperfect consciences is most keen and searching. "Some consciences seem to be wholly insignificant and weak till they are tempest-strung, or get mounted somehow on the back of passion. There is no human creature so thoroughly wicked and diabolical as he that is protesting in the heat of his will, or the fume of his grudges and resentments, how conscientious he is. Another kind of conscience appears to be felt mainly as an irritant. It pricks and nettles, but

does not very much sway even the subject himself. It is sharp, pungent, thin, but never kingly. There is also a slimy, would-be tender, slow-moving conscience, that draws itself in vicious softness like a snail upon a limb, till, presto, the conscientious slime hardens into a shell, and what seemed an almost skinless sensibility becomes a horny casement of impracticability, obstinacy, or bigot stiffness. Now these and all such partial, crotchety, and misbegotten consciences are insufficient to make a powerful preacher. Their diameter is not big enough to carry any great projectile of conviction. No matter what, or how great, his promise on the score of his other gifts and acquirements, he cannot be impressive because there is no ring of authority in his moral nature " (p. 201).

"A large, immediate, and free beholding is necessary to make a powerful preacher." . . . "Faith has a way of proving premises themselves, namely, by seeing them. In virtue of the faith-talent, we have the possibility also of divine inspirations, and of all those exaltations — visibly divine movements in the soul — that endow and are needed to endow the preacher " (p. 203).

"There is nothing more evident than that one may have all the four canonical talents in great promise, and yet have almost no faith-talent with them, no inspiration, no capacity of any. The nature they have is either a nature too impetuous, or too close, to let any divine movement have play in it. The preacher must be a very different kind



of man: one who can be unified with God by his faith, and go into preaching not as a calling but a call; one who can do more than get up notions about God, and preach the notions; one who knows God as he knows his friend, and by closeness of insight gets a Christly meaning in his look, a divine quality in his voice, action visibly swayed by unknown impulse, imaginations that are apocalyptic, beauty of feeling not earthly, authority flavored by heavenly sanctity and sweetness, argument that breaks out in flame, asserting new premises and fertilizing old ones more by what is put into them than by what is deduced from them. Such a man can be God's prophet; that is to say, he can preach" (p. 205).

He rates as indispensable what he calls "a man's *atmosphere*," — an undefinable quantity which may be hinted at as "the moral aroma of character;" or "magnetic sphere of the person;" or "the voice, color, feature, manner, and general soul-play represented in them."

There are good atmospheres that are yet "disqualifications in the preacher."

"One carries about with him, for example, the inevitable literary atmosphere, and a shower-bath on his audience could not more effectually kill the sermon. Another preaches out of a scientific atmosphere, which is scarcely better; another out of a philosophic, which is even worse, for no human soul is going either to be pierced for sin, or to repent of it, scientifically; and as little is any one

going to believe, or hope, or walk with God, or be a little child, philosophically. No man ever becomes a really great preacher who has not the talent of a right and genuinely Christian atmosphere" (p. 209).

After naming the "administrative, organizing capacity," of which he says "it takes more high manhood, more wisdom, firmness, character, and right-seeing ability to administer well in the cause than it does to preach well," the essay closes with words of friendly advice, first warning the preacher against *conceit* as "the bane of faith;" yet "not to think so meanly of yourself that you cannot be yourself." "Remember also, as a law of the talents, that any one of them waked into power wakes the talent next to it, and that in like manner another, till finally the whole circle wakes into power." "What we want is not to go hunting our poor nature through, that we may find what is slumbering in us waiting to be somehow waked. But the grand first thing, or chief concern for us is to be simply Christed all through, filled in every faculty and member with his Christly manifestation, in that manner to be so interwoven with him as to cross fibre and feel throughout the quickening contact of his personality; and then everything in us, no matter what, will be made the most of, because the corresponding Christly talent will be playing divinely with it, and charging it with power from himself" (p. 219).

The second paper, "Training for the Pulpit

Manward," is even more searching. It is throughout a steady protest against getting "stalled in abstract theology," and a plea, repeated in every page, that the preacher should "keep in the living world and make a part of it," — a leading characteristic of Bushnell himself, both as a preacher and a theologian. We have room for but one quotation, which we introduce because, guided by the underlying thought of his subject, he treats sin in a first-hand way, which is not always the case elsewhere in his writings. We do not hesitate to class it among the most powerful utterances on the subject.

"I suggest again, as a matter closely related, the very large, really sublime interest we should get in persons, or souls, in distinction from subjects, by putting the mind down carefully on the study or due exploration of sin. I do not mean by this any theologic exploration, such as we have reported in our systems, no questioning about the origin, or propagation, or totality, or disability, or inmedicable guilt of sin, but a going into and through it as it is, and the strange wild work it makes in the intestine struggles and wars of the mind. For it is a fact, I fear, that we sometimes very nearly kill our natural interest in persons, by just bolting them down theologically into what we call death and there making an end. We clap an extinguisher on them, in this manner, and they drop out of interest, just where they become most interesting, — where meaning, and size, and force, and

depth of sorrow, and amount of life, and everything fit to engage our concern is most impressively revealed. Say no more of the dignity of human nature; here is something far beyond all that,—a wild, strange flame raging inwardly in that nature, that, for combinations of great feeling, and war, and woe, is surpassed by no tragedy or epic, nor by all tragedies and epics together. Here in the soul's secret chambers are Fausts more subtle than Faust, Hamlets more mysterious than Hamlet, Lears more distracted and desolate than Lear; wills that do what they allow not, and what they would not do; wars in the members; bodies of death to be carried, as in Paul; wild horses of the mind, governed by no rein, as in Plato; subtleties of cunning, plausibilities of seeming virtues, memories writ in letters of fire, great thoughts heaving under the brimstone marl of revenges, pains of wrong and of sympathy with suffering wrong, aspirations that have lost courage, hates, loves, beautiful dreams, and tears; — all these acting at cross-purposes and representing, as it were to sight, the broken order of the mind. Getting into the secret working, and seeing how the drama goes on in so many mystic parts, the wondrous life-scene — shall we call it poetry? — takes on a look at once brilliant and pitiful and appalling, and what we call the person becomes a world of boundless capacities shaken out of their law, energies in full conflict and without government, passions that are wild, sorrows that are weak. By such explorations,

never to be exhausted by discovery, our sense of person or mind or soul is widely opened and may always be kept fresh" (p. 232).

These quotations on preaching, so largely disproportionate to the size of our volume, are designedly made because they so clearly and aptly reveal Bushnell as a theologian, as a preacher, and as a man. It would be a great mistake to omit these two essays from the instruction of candidates for the ministry. The substance of them may be wrought into other men's work, but the piercing insight, the remorseless probing into motives, the massive common sense, the play of wit and wisdom, the balance of truth, the spiritual power, the absolute transcript of the inmost meaning of the gospel, — all set in noblest forms and glowing with passion, — nowhere else are these things to be found as in these addresses.

In the essay on "Religious Music" we find him, as everywhere else, testing his principle that the universe of nature is a perfect analogon of the universe of thought or spirit. Bushnell, as his biographer remarks, was "musically organized." It might be more closely said that he was rhythmically organized. The most marked quality in his style is its rhythm, — a feature now subordinated to the modern demand that every sentence shall have the edge and ring of steel. We insist on scientific accuracy, and leave out the music which is also a part of science; but when we have gone further into nature, we shall return to what is

deepest in it, and suffer the rhythmic beat to come back into our sentences. Bushnell's style was as inevitable as his ear, and was the product of it. He both heard and thought rhythmically, and the thought led him into the inmost chamber of nature, where he discovered its profoundest secret. This sense was so strong that many passages, like the closing pages of "Life, and the Lives," and another that will be quoted at the end of this chapter, are distinctly poems both in sentiment and rhythmic swing. He himself recognized this quality:—

"This divine principle of music breaks into the style of every good writer, every powerful speaker, and beats in rhythmic life in his periods. Even if he is rough and fierce, as he may be and as true genius often is, it will yet be the roughness of an inspired movement; a wizard storm of sounds that rage in melody, not the dead jolting of cadences that have no inner life back of the wind-force that utters them. The talent of music is the possibility, in fact, of rhythm, of inspiration, and of all poetic life" (p. 464).

Musicians are the least able of all artists to explain their art; they either lapse into sentimentality, or stop on technique, or, rightly enough, are content with feeling it. Bushnell in this essay, though he does not explain music, traces it to its source in nature, where he finds in all objects a capacity for sound that corresponds to our feelings as religious beings;—"a wonderful fact that God has hidden powers of music in things without life;

and that when they are used in right distinctions, or properties of sound, they discourse what we know, — what meets, interprets, and works our feeling, as living and spiritual creatures." From this starting-point he goes on to discuss the fact "that a grand, harmonic, soul-interpreting law of music pervades all the objects of the material creation, and that things without life, all metals and woods and valleys and mountains and waters, are tempered with distinctions of sound, and toned to be a language to the feeling of the heart."

The following passage is a memory of his experience on the Great Scheidegg above Grindelwald :

"If it seems incredible that the soul of music is in the heart of all created being, then the laws of harmony themselves shall answer, one string vibrating to another, when it is not struck itself, and uttering its voice of concord simply because the concord is in it and it feels the pulses on the air to which it cannot be silent. Nay, the solid mountains and their giant masses of rock shall answer ; catching, as they will, the bray of horns, or the stunning blast of cannon, rolling it across from one top to another in reverberating pulses, till it falls into bars of musical rhythm and chimes and cadences of silver melody. I have heard some fine music, as men are wont to speak, — the play of orchestras, the anthems of choirs, the voices of song that moved admiring nations. But in the lofty passes of the Alps, I heard a music overhead from God's cloudy orchestra, the giant peaks of rock and

ice, curtained in by the driving mist and only dimly visible athwart the sky through its folds, such as mocks all sounds our lower worlds of art can ever hope to raise. I stood (excuse the simplicity) calling to them, in the loudest shouts I could raise, even till my power was spent, and listening in compulsory trance to their reply. I heard them roll it up through their cloudy worlds of snow, sifting out the harsh qualities that were tearing in it as demon screams of sin, holding on upon it as if it were a hymn they were fining to the ear of the great Creator, and sending it round and round in long reduplications of sweetness, minute after minute, till finally receding and rising, it trembled, as it were, among the quick gratulations of angels, and fell into the silence of the pure empyrean. I had never any conception before of what is meant by *quality* in sound. There was more power upon the soul in one of those simple notes than I ever expect to feel from anything called music below, or ever can feel till I hear them again in the choirs of the angelic world. I had never such a sense of purity, or of what a simple sound may tell of purity, by its own pure quality; and I could not but say, O my God, teach me this! Be this in me forever! And I can truly affirm that the experience of that hour has consciously made me better able to think of God ever since — better able to worship. All other sounds are gone; the sounds of yesterday, heard in the silence of enchanted multitudes, are gone; but that is with me still, and I hope will never cease



to ring in my spirit, till I go down to the slumber of silence itself" (p. 455).

In 1869, stirred by John Stuart Mill's recent advocacy of woman's suffrage, and by the general agitation of the subject, he prepared a small volume, which he named with his usual skill, "The Reform against Nature." Its aim is perhaps best indicated by a homely illustration (p. 101): "If the log may be split by the wooden wedge, most of us would like to be sure that the wedge is not going to be split by the log."

The dedication is so neat and characteristic a bit of writing that it must be quoted:—

"For once I will dare to break open one of the customary seals of silence, by inscribing this little book to the woman I know best and most thoroughly; having been overlapped, as it were, and curtained in the same consciousness for the last thirty-six years. If she is offended that I do it without her consent, I hope she may get over the offense shortly, as she has a great many others that were worse. She has been with me in many weaknesses and some storms, giving strength alike in both; sharp enough to see my faults, faithful enough to expose them, and considerate enough to do it wisely: shrinking never from loss, or blame, or shame to be encountered in anything right to be done; adding great and high instigations,—instigations always to good, and never to evil mistaken for good; forecasting always things bravest and best to be done, and supplying inspirations enough

to have made a hero, if they had not lacked the timber. If I have done anything well, she has been the more really in it that she did not know it, and the more willingly also that having her part in it known has not occurred to her; compelling me thus to honor not less, but more, the covert glory of the womanly nature; even as I obtain a distincter and more wondering apprehension of the divine meanings, and moistenings, and countless, unbought ministries it contributes to this otherwise very dry world."

"Moral Uses of Dark Things" is a book of substantially the same character as "Nature and the Supernatural," having the same purpose to bring the "dark things" of the universe and of human experience into "the one system of God." The title itself challenged him to the keenest use of his faculties. It was a passion with him to solve problems. Like Edwards, he did not hesitate to discuss "God's final ends in creation" when his theme led him in that direction. He liked to play with questions, to toss them in the air and see in what shape they would come back to him. This book affords an opportunity to correct a general impression that Bushnell was not a wide reader, and even avoided books. The impression grows out of the fact that he seldom quotes, and also from the undeniable fact that he was not a wide and thorough reader in what is termed theology. But before deciding whether that was a professional crime in him, it would be

well to find out what were the professional limits for such a theologian as Bushnell. It is true that he did not read books of systematic theology, nor did he care much for those of the Bridgewater Treatise stamp; and for metaphysics he cared nothing; but he read history freely, and in the great masters of literature, — “the literature of power,” as De Quincey called it, — from Plato and Shakespeare down, he was a careful and constant reader. Such reading, indeed, did not fit him to enter as an equal into the theological arena of his day, where the weapons were chosen from another arsenal, and the conflicts were over definition and precedent; but the time was near at hand when theology, as Dr. Arnold was already urging, must draw from all fields of study and thought, and must find its questions debated in the literature of humanity rather than in bodies of divinity. There Bushnell went as by instinct, and was at home. That he was unread in technical theology in no way hindered him from doing the thing that needed to be done. The interpretations of Christianity that the world is now receiving do not come in that channel, but from adjacent or original sources, — from poets and essayists and naturalists and practical workers in fields of Christian activity. The books that are influencing theology to-day come from such sources, and the question whether the authors are familiar with technical theology is relatively unimportant. The writer does not deride theology past or present, — it will always be the queen of

the sciences, — but only seeks to make it clear that it is a matter of trifling significance that Bushnell was not a wide reader of it. He was a forerunner of a class of students and thinkers who are moulding if not re-creating theology without being technical theologians.

The topics in this book wear an audacious cast ; some have been debated from the beginning and are still without answer ; others are undergoing the scrutiny of science ; and others still are speedily lost in the mystery of being. Most of them are inroads into psychology, then even more than now a rudimentary science. The fault, if there be any, in his treatment is over-emphasis of his main contention. He starts with a determination to find a moral use in whatever falls under his eye, and so names some things as moral that are simply economic or incidental, and moral only as contributing to a final moral use. The end of all things may be moral, but to regard everything that leads up to it as moral is to set aside distinctions that are essential to exact thought, and to force all things into one category. Bushnell is correct in denying the assumption " that physical uses are the decisive tests or objects of all the contrivance to be looked for in God's works," and in contending that " they are resolvable only by their moral uses ; " but it is a mistake to regard the physical and the moral as antithetic. It is at this point that he lets in certain theological conceptions that relate to evil and its effect on nature which no longer have foot-

ing in the world of thought ; moral evil has nothing to do with nature ; even analogy fails to connect them. But the chief defect in these papers is an inevitable one, growing out of the imperfect science of the day. Bushnell was a scientific thinker, but there was at the time no theory of nature as a whole that was scientific. Some of his topics, however, were cosmical in their breadth, and his treatment of them could not always be synthetic. He wrote before evolution had been baptized into the household of faith, and hence was without the guidance of that general law under which he could have ranged his facts in scientific and harmonious order. But while ignorant of evolution, he was all the while using it in unconscious ways simply because his thought ran so close to it at many points. Still, what he lacked, less, indeed, than any theological writer of his day, was a unifying principle in his use of scientific facts. In its place he put analogy, — a hint, but not a law. Hence some of the essays are a mixture of truth and mistake, as those on Pain, and Physical Danger. But it is easy to pass over the mistake, and dwell on the truth, which often is most fresh and suggestive.

The book is fascinating beyond almost any other from his pen by reason of its intellectual glow and vigor. Evidently the papers came from him when he was at his best. In no other of his works is there such wealth of epigram and such flash of genius. Often a treatise is compressed into a sentence, as when he says that "the faith of immor-

tality depends on a sense of it begotten, not on an argument for it concluded." He calls "sleep a spiritualizer in the constitution of nature itself," and pain "a kind of general sacrament for the world." "God is always letting things come into the world that He will not let stay in it." "While God is doing facts, we are thinking dangers." "Immortality is nothing but the fact translated of immutable morality." The chapter from which this quotation is taken — "Of the Mutabilities of Life" — not only redeems a hackneyed theme from the commonplace, but is an original discussion of immortality, and fit to become a classic on the subject. Indeed, the whole book is full of profound suggestion and subjects that are inevitably treated in the pulpit, and the young preacher cannot do better than first to saturate his mind with them, and then borrow as liberally as honesty will allow. We take the liberty to commend especially Bushnell's description of a wise man in the paper on "Insanity" (p. 269), the ablest, perhaps, in the series, a masterly summation of requisites that reminds one of John Henry Newman's description of a gentleman in his "Idea of a University" (p. 208), and of the uses of education (p. 178), two pages of English literature hard to be matched in discriminating analysis and beauty of diction.

"A wise man is one who understands himself well enough to make due allowance for such unsane moods and varieties, never concluding that a thing is thus or thus, because just now it bears

that look ; waiting often to see what a sleep, or a walk, or a cool revision, or perhaps a considerable turn of repentance will do. He does not slash upon a subject or a man from the point of a just now rising temper. He maintains a noble candor, by waiting sometimes for a gentler spirit and a better sense of truth. He is never intolerant of other men's judgments, because he is a little distrustful of his own. He restrains the dislikes of prejudice, because he has a prejudice against his dislikes. His resentments are softened by his condemnations of himself. His depressions do not crush him, because he has sometimes seen the sun, and believes it may appear again. He revises his opinions readily, because he has a right, he thinks, to better opinions, if he can find them. He holds fast sound opinions, lest his moodiness in change should take all truth away. And if his unsane thinking appears to be toppling him down the gulfs of skepticism, he recovers himself by just raising the question whether a more sane way of thinking might not think differently. A man who is duly aware thus of his own distempered faculty makes a life how different from one who acts as if he were infallible, and had nothing to do but just to let himself be pronounced ! There is, in fact, no possibility of conducting a life successfully on in that manner. If there be any truth that vitally concerns the morally right self-keeping and beauty of character, it is that which allows and makes room for the distempers of a practically unsane.

state; one that puts action by the side of correction, and keeps it in wisdom by keeping it in regulative company" (p. 269).

We take leave of these delightful papers, that "tear the disguise of a curse from many a blessing," with a quotation from that on Winter, — half sermon and half idyl, full of apothegm and poetry, common sense and fancy, the logic halting at times but still holding on to its conclusion, — a paper to be read with Whittier's "Snow-Bound," and closing with an exquisite touch, perhaps a personal forecast mingling with the words:—

"Now is the time to meditate all our most serious concerns of life anew. If the main question is still unsettled or unattended to, there is no other so good time for a duty that requires so much of concentration. If we have grown slack in our principles, now is the time to set them up and be ourselves set up in their company. If the fascinations of time have stolen us away from the invisible good, now is the time to set our gaze more steadfastly on it, when the good that is visible is frosted, and hid under snows from the sight. Now is the time to be rational and strong, to revise our mistakes, shake off our self-indulgences, prepare our charities, justify our friendships, shed a sacred influence over our families, set ourselves to the service of our country and our God, by whatever cost of sacrifice. Doing this, as we may, it will not much concern us, I think, if our flight should also be in the winter" (p. 209).



## **CHAPTER XVII**

### **HOME LIFE AND LAST DAYS**

"I thank God that the Cross has been set up in the world, for thereby have I learned to know what Life means."

"I long to be risen from the dead, and fully alive as I was made to live! Nothing now looks captivating to me but to be altogether entered into God and quieted in the inspirations of true Faith." — BUSHNELL.

"After this it was noised abroad that Mr. Valiant-for-truth was taken with a summons by the same post as the other, and had this for a token that the summons was true, 'that his pitcher was broken at the fountain.' When he understood it, he called for his friends and told them of it. Then said he, 'I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who now will be my rewarder.'" — *Pilgrim's Progress*.

## CHAPTER XVII

### HOME LIFE AND LAST DAYS

BUSHNELL was a theologian of the type that requires a knowledge of the life quite as much as an examination of opinions. His heart made him the theologian he was ; hence a look at him in his home is necessary. We quote freely from his daughter in the Biography.

“First among my recollections . . . are the daily, after-dinner romps, not lasting long, but most vigorous and hearty at the moment.

“A playful use of the faculties seemed ever to present its ideal side to him, and it was thus that he joined with his children ‘in the free self-impulsion of play, which is to foreshadow the glorious liberty of the soul’s ripe order and attainment in good.’ Thus he made of our childhood ‘a paradise of nature, the recollection of which behind us might image to us the paradise of grace before us.’ It was while watching the play of his own children with a graceful kitten that he conceived the idea which animates his ‘Work and Play;’ and in the same manner he drew from his own home experience the child-loving chapter on ‘Plays and Pastimes,’ in his ‘Christian Nurture.’ Fun was

one element of his playfulness, constantly bubbling over from the deep spring of his most earnest thought, sparkling in unexpected places, and ever refreshing the long and dusty stages of life's journey. He was no story-teller or professed wit ; but the droll side of a subject was always peeping out at him, and he let it flash from his speech along with his more serious conceptions, as if it had a right to be there. . Twenty years of ill-health did not quench this light, nor, even at death's door, extinguish it."

"Summer mornings and their dewy freshness are forever associated with him. The *reveille* which waked us from healthy slumber was often the brisk whetting of his scythe. Many a time have I risen, to watch him from the window, as he put in practice still his early theory of 'making the cross frictions correct each other.' He swung his scythe easily, cutting rapidly a broad, clean swath. It was his habit to rise very early, and to work for an hour or two in his garden before breakfast, roughly dressed. Work done, he took a heroic shower-bath, made a neat toilet, and appeared in the shady breakfast-room with smooth locks (they were usually, at other times, the reverse of smooth), and with a cheerful, composed mien, as he conducted the family prayers. At breakfast the daily paper became, through him, the epitome of the world to us all. He brought to the reading all his resources, — his thought on social philosophy ; his knowledge of geography, chemistry, and geology ;

his love of adventure, of mechanics, of architecture, and of engineering in its various branches; and throwing his own light on every subject, evolved from the daily telegrams a fascinating panoramic view of the world's life for the past twenty-four hours. Under his magic insight the most commonplace events assumed an unlooked-for meaning, and took their place in relation to all other events and histories. He had no unrelated facts.<sup>1</sup> In all matters pertaining to our national welfare his patriotism was ever on the alert, and he saw on the horizon 'the cloud no bigger than a man's hand,' which to other eyes had hardly yet begun to threaten storm. At the dinner-table he came to us from his thought-world, from the writing of sermons or books; and then he was no more of the outward, but of the subjective and inward life. Then his very hair stood on end, electric with thought; his eyes had a fixed and absent look, and he forgot the name of a potato. His mind being far away, the present body fed itself hastily, and with little note of food or drink. It was no wonder that he experienced the horrors of dyspepsia. But for the enforced exercise of the afternoon, he would have been earlier the victim of untimely brain-work.

"Never was there such a companion for a walk or a drive, though he was a very careless driver. He saw twice as much as most people do out of

<sup>1</sup> We regard this sentence as the most discriminating remark concerning Bushnell that we have ever seen.

doors, took a mental survey of all land surfaces, and kept in his head a complete map of the physical geography of every place with which he was acquainted. He knew the leaf and bark of every tree and shrub that grows in New England; estimated the water power of every stream he crossed; knew where all the springs were, and how they could be made available; engineered roads and railroads; laid out, in imagination, parks, cemeteries, and private places; noted the laying of every bit of stone wall, and the gait of every horse; buildings, machinery, the natural formations of geology, — nothing escaped him. And the charm of it was, that whether he was planning some improvement or observing some natural beauty, it was all done easily, while he cut a cane from a roadside thicket, or brushed the flies from his horse.

“In the parental relation, he was, without effort or self-assertion, possessed of an unbounded influence. Always amiable and gentle at home, he rarely reproved, and gave few commands. I think I can still count on the fingers of one hand every occasion on which I received from him a real reprimand. Then every word told, — for words were few, — and brought a burning shame for the wrong. It was not the voice of his personal authority, but Right and Truth incarnate, which spoke through him, and spoke always to a convicted conscience. He was singularly obliging and considerate, and never called any one to wait upon

him, preferring for himself and his children a habit of personal independence and self-help. Even after he had been many years an invalid, he would not allow any one to carry up the wood for his study fire, and would arrive at the top of the second flight of stairs with his armful, panting, but still rejoicing in his victory over nature. He encouraged his little girls to help him in many a piece of domestic work, such as raking up the dooryard, or piling wood in the cellar, and, if he was overlooking our good old William, would generally do rather more than half the work, finding that easier than to show some one else how to do it."

The account of his final visit to his early home must not be omitted: —

"One autumn, when we were about to leave New Preston, my father said to his daughters, — 'You may never be here with me again, and I want to take you to my old home and over the old farm.' We went, and saw the stalwart maples before the door of the homestead, which he had himself brought down as saplings from the mountain upon his shoulders and planted there. We drank of the delicious cold spring beneath a fine tree, where he used sometimes to take his nooning when at farm-work, snatching perhaps a little time for study as a seasoning for the dinner-pail. There was his boasted piece of stone wall, proof of the accuracy of his eye, as firm now as when he laid it fifty years ago. Each stone fits snugly in its place, the corresponding surfaces having come together

as if by some law of hidden affinity. It is doubtful if he was ever as well satisfied with any of his writings as he was with that stone wall. There, too, in the same field, if I mistake not, was the big boulder, in the shadow of which he had once prayed in youthful doubt and distress, with, perhaps, some unconscious allusion to the 'shadow of a great rock in a weary land,' and whence, even in boyhood, his heart had exhaled in mist at sunrise the dew of its heavenward aspirations. He spoke to us, as often before, of his good and wise mother, the notable housewife and care-taker, the discreet adviser and patient manager of wayward boyhood. Yonder, on the hill, was the church, — the meeting-house, rather, — whither he used to trudge on Sundays at his mother's side, to listen to that old-time religious teaching, on whose 'hard anvils of abstraction the blows of thought must needs be ever ringing.' There, down in the hollow, was the dam which he built for his father's mill. The mill is long since gone to ruin, but the dam remains in good condition. Recollections crowded fast, and time was too short for all we would have liked to see. We were on our homeward way, and I believe it was indeed the last time I was ever there with him."

"One amiable peculiarity of his was his ready admiration for very young men of his own profession. No matter how slight the sapling, he saw hope in the growing tree, and had his encouragements and praise always ready. A man was apt



to be judged, first of all, by his legs and his manner of standing on them. He who could not stand straight and square upon his foundations, or who wriggled and twisted a body supported on weak, unsteady columns, found little favor in my father's eyes. But youth has infinite possibilities, and his imagination reveled in the possible greatness to be evolved from its chaos. At least, it was in this way only that we could account for his estimate of many young ministers. The most recent graduate of the divinity school, still floundering in things too deep for him, accepting and offering as equivalents for ideas the terminology of the schools, and struggling somehow to get expressed the thoughts he had but half thought, found in him a patient hearer and indulgent critic. We used to say that he was wont to attribute to the young speaker the thoughts which he had himself had leisure to think out during the service. At the same time, he had perhaps too little regard for the supersensitiveness of morbid youth. He liked a sensibility which was large and full-toned, and which responded with harmonious vibrations to the touch of great inspirations. But that kind of sensibility which is only a source of irritable suffering to the subject he might pity, but could not understand."

"Of my father's paternal tenderness, shown daily in little ways, and sometimes, in rare moments, finding exquisite expression, this is not the place to speak openly. It may be guessed what warmth he radiated, if we recall that luminous revelation

of himself when he said, 'It is the strongest want of my being, to love.' Nor can we reveal the gentle, fatherly counsels, and the attractive personal religious talks, all the more prized because of their rarity. In such conversations it was always the winning, never the compelling side of religious experience, which he presented to us. In the light of such sacred revelations of himself, the life which he had been living before us day by day, year after year, was known by us to have its source, not in his own will merely, however high and fixed its purpose, but mainly in such inspirations as come from God himself. It was impossible to live with him and not recognize the freedom and spontaneity of his action. Every sacrifice was voluntary, and all his effort resembled play. And although this was more easily possible in a nature which worked with the ease and power of his, yet he believed, and we felt, that it was a living faith which made and kept him free. . . .

"But when all is said, there is nothing said which will make his image live again. One glimpse of his figure, as he walked along the street with that long, springy step of his, the cane swinging and pointing forward decisively as he went, would be worth it all. Or, if that were too slight ground for an acquaintance with him, the door of friendship even might be opened by a gleam of that penetrating smile which ever and anon illumined his grave face. Better still it would be to hear him talk for a moment in terse and picturesque phrase

about the common things of life, a new-coined word or a sharply fresh suggestion revealing the original mind. But it was in family life that he shone the brightest. Let it be no detracting from his magnitude that my father was largest and most ideal to those who knew him in the nearness of family life and love. It is they who know most of his zest, his enthusiasm, his inspirable faculty; of the wit and *piquant* flavor of his language; of the lofty and refined purity of his feelings and his habits, and his delicate considerateness for those who were dear to him; of his great unexpressed and inexpressible tenderness; of the reasoning faith which beheld the unseen."

The writer, having had but slight personal acquaintance with Bushnell, can give no account of him that would be of any value as compared with this tender and exquisite picture of his home life. Hence the liberal quotations made in this chapter in regard to his closing years.

It was in 1870 that the struggle of nearly twenty years began sensibly to draw toward a close. But though literally a decline, it was a period of work up to the very last, and, more than all, it was a period of self-development and ripening into the ideal of his character. He began his life with a passion for God; it gave direction to his first theological expression; it runs through all his works and underlies his alleged heresies; it fills and crowns his life in these last years. To understand Bushnell, it is necessary to understand

this passionate sense of God. While spending some time on the shores of Lake Waramaug, he writes to his wife in a strain almost ecstatic ; but if closely examined, it will be seen to be, like everything that came from him, severely ratiocinative. He could not feel in any way, nor on any subject, without an unconscious play of the reasoning faculty ; or, it is better to say, without the action of his entire nature in its right proportions, the thought of God crowning and dominating the whole.

WARREN, August 7, 1870.

I have had some delightful times and passages since I came here such as I never had before. I never so saw God, never had Him come so broadly, clearly out. He has not spoken to me, but He has done what is more. There has been nothing debatable to speak for, but an infinite easiness and universal presentation to thought, as it were by revelation. Nothing ever seemed so wholly inviting and so profoundly supreme to the mind. Had there been a strain for it, then it could not be. O my God ! what a fact to possess and know that He is ! I have not seemed to compare Him with anything, and set Him in a higher value ; but He has been the *all*, and the altogether, everywhere, lovely. There is nothing else to compete ; there is nothing else, in fact. It has been as if all the revelations, through good men, nature, Christ, had been now through, and their cargo unloaded, the capital meaning produced, and the God set forth in his

own proper day, — the good, the true, the perfect, the all-holy and benignant. The question has not been whether I could somehow get nearer, but as if He had come out himself just near enough, and left me nothing but to stand still and see the salvation ; no excitement, no stress, but an amazing beatific tranquillity. I never thought I could possess God so completely.

To a friend he said : “ If I had my life to live over again, there is one thing I would not do — I would not push.”

To a stranger struggling against implacability, apparently under aggravated provocations, he wrote : “ Great trials make great saints. Deserts and stone pillows prepare for an open heaven and an angel-crowded ladder. But you are indeed sorely probed, and from the depths of my soul I pity you. If this is any comfort to you, let down your bucket to the end of your chain, with the assurance that what is deepest and most tender in me is open to your dip. But your victory rests with yourself. Kinghood over the vast territory of self must be, in order to a genuine forgiveness. To tear yourself from yourself, to double yourself up and thrust yourself under your heels, and make a general smash of yourself, and be all the more truly yourself for this mauling and self-annihilation, — this is the work before you, and a mighty work it is. To accomplish this, we must be close enough to Immanuel to feel the beating of his

heart. By the time you are through your struggle, you will be a god, fit to occupy a seat with Christ in his throne. Kings alone can truly forgive, as kings alone can reign. You know the import of the Cross. Set your heart like a flint against every suggestion that cheapens the blood of the dear, great Lamb, and you will as surely get the meaning of Christ crucified, as that he left his life in the world."

In 1871, and in the years following, he spent a part of the spring and summer in Ripton, Vermont, at the Bread Loaf Inn. His letters are much in the strain of those already quoted, full of an ever-deepening sense of God, and of hope that he may live to carry out his work on "Forgiveness and Law." He writes: "What a comfort there is in the fact that God is a supreme Integer, helping us up always into range with himself." "I do not want to stay and wear away into feebleness. Let me go, if I may, with some sense in me."

In August he writes to his wife:—

"I have a good many very sweet hours in these wood walks and climbings, never alone, but having my dear, shall I say revered, Friend with me. I had yesterday (Sunday) a delightful refreshment in reading, out of Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister,' Vol. I., the 'Confessions of a Fair Saint.' I never read a Christian experience that so beautifully tallied with my own, the main difference being that the Fair Saint never had been much of an unbeliever, save as her friends, over-strict in ortho-

doxy, were obliged to trouble themselves much on her account. I was never more struck than by the observation, that living in feeling and subjective thought, independently of outward objects and works, 'tends, as it were, to excavate us and to undermine the whole foundation of our being.' As if it were a way to become hollow and finally vacant." The passage from Goethe goes on as follows: "To be active is the primary vocation of man; all the intervals in which he is obliged to rest, he should employ in gaining clearer knowledge of external things, for this will in its turn facilitate activity." <sup>1</sup>

It is not strange that Bushnell was struck with the resemblance; no description of himself could be closer. It is interesting also as showing a sympathy with Goethe's views of religion. In many respects the two men were alike in the play of their minds.

While at Ripton he published in "The Advance" (Chicago) a series of suggestive articles on Prayer, and carried through the press his sermons on "Living Subjects." Meanwhile he was still busy with "Forgiveness and Law," a work which, whatever may be said of its theological value, had root in his deepest experiences. Nothing that came from his pen was more sincere. He attributed to God his own feelings and struggles in attaining to that forgiveness which he felt he must exercise

<sup>1</sup> Dowden's edition, vol. i. p. 409. Further points of marked sympathy can be traced on page 382.

towards those who had ill-treated him. In July, 1873, he heard that his long labor for the Park in Hartford, and the erection of the State House within its grounds, had ended in success. He wrote to his wife as follows :—

“I see, by a little scrap in the ‘Springfield Republican,’ that the State-house battle is probably carried. Hang up the bow and the quiver now, and be at peace! Thank God, my days of war are ended! I will not fight again, even for Hartford. I am delighted now to spread myself out on the quiet of a last age, which I hope and pray may be my best. Perhaps my irresponsibility, my unengagedness and clearness of burden, may do something for me physically; if not, I hope it will spiritually, at least.”

During his last stay at Bread Loaf Inn he met Professor Austin Phelps of Andover and the Rev. Dr. George Bacon of Orange, New Jersey. With the latter he formed a warm friendship that proved of great service and comfort to him. The sojourn of Professor Phelps under the same roof furnished him the data for an elaborate article published in the “Christian Union” (now “The Outlook”) soon after Bushnell’s death. Quotations from it will be made in the next chapter.

The close of 1873 found him, as he wrote to Dr. George Bacon, “going steadily down, but contriving meantime to work a little.” He had finished “Forgiveness and Law,” but, as if suspicious of it, submitted it to friends, asking their



“most fearless criticism.” In a letter to his lifelong friend, Mr. Chesebrough, dated May 21, 1874, he says: “It is the newest thing I have done for the matter of it, and I have been suffering real oppression of mind from the uncertainty I am in, lest I may not have been able to adjust myself rightly in the statement.” To Dr. Bacon he writes (May 4, 1874): “I have a queer feeling about this book. . . . I seem to have struck out in it beyond the sight of land, uncertain of everything, yet afraid of nothing, and in some sense confident of finding my way into harbor.” In this sentence we find the source of his confidence and of his uncertainty; the analogies confirmed his faith, but they also “drove him out of sight of land.” As with Plato, a too close look at nature dazzled him, and he drifted toward regions from which he had fled. When reminded by a critic in the “Christian Union” that he had pressed his analogy too far, he coincides unless the analogy be regarded as holding “only so far as our proper nature is compared with the divine nature.” He seems to forget that it is the limit of resemblance that is the point in question. His fear lest he had heretofore looked too much on the manward side of the subject was unnecessary. The incarnation contains all the elements of the problem, and the development of that was the harbor to be sought. As often happens with a great original thinker, he failed to see the trend of his work taken as a whole. It did not set toward divine

self-placating nor toward anything in that region, but toward the incarnation viewed as the life of God in humanity, where the grounds of forgiveness are faith and obedience. With Bushnell's last word in regard to this book we have profound sympathy: "It is not summation of doctrine that we want. We have enough of that. What we want a great deal more is something to give us greater breadth of standing and greater vitality of idea." But this was to be found not in the interior working of the Godhead, but where he had always been looking for it, — in a fuller revelation of God in the world, especially in nature and the unfolding of society. What society meant he well understood, but nature had not spoken to him its great secret. It is pathetic to think of him as standing on the border-land of evolution, but not entering it. Few would have so fully grasped its central meaning, and so clearly traced it to its divine conclusion. It would have corrected those aberrations of thought noticeable here and there in his references to nature, and turned the dream of his life into reality. His biographer speaks of his interest during these last days in the revelations of science, especially the correlation of forces, and says: "He welcomed them, not only for their scientific beauty and value, but because he believed them to fit so perfectly into the wider science of life, and to furnish images and interpretations so grand in the higher ranges of thought."

After the publication of "Forgiveness and Law"

in the spring of 1874, his health sensibly declined, and he spent the summer in Norfolk, a beautiful hill-town in the northern part of the State. While here he wrote: "I may last a year, or even five as a remote possibility, but I shall never be girded again, I think." He dwelt on his book, evidently with a question haunting him, yet confident, as he wrote to Mr. Chesebrough, that he had "gained something for the Gospel, by bringing it closer down to the analogies of nature; . . . Law and Commandment pack the world full of their analogies, composing, as it were, their analogue of the great salvation." Nothing is more satisfactory in these last days of Bushnell than his full fidelity to the early thought of his life; namely, Nature as the analogue of the Spirit. His life was rounded not with a sleep, but with a constant vision, full of delight and wonder, of the world in which he found himself. He had "no unrelated facts," and nature, with its laws and processes, always stood before him as a clear sign and symbol of an eternal order. It is not worth while to assign this to any school of thought, philosophical or religious, for he did not come at it in that way; it belonged to him when a youth, and was self-attested at every step in his life.

He returned from Norfolk in the autumn, "less renewed than ever before by change of scene and rest." It was at this time that the following pen picture was drawn by a minister of the city: —

"Who of us does not remember his spare figure,

muscular, active, with that energetic walk of his ; not hasty, indeed leisurely, but with a kind of spring in every motion ? Who does not recall the iron-gray hair, tossed carelessly about ; the stout oak stick ; the garments studiously unprofessional, yet never careless ; a happy remove from both elegance and roughness ? Who has not seen that face, so full of expression ; the skin, of late so clear and transparent ; the eye, large, deep, and inquiring ; the easy recognition, the flash of wit, the blunt reply ? These are all matters of common observation in Hartford ; for he was one of the notables of the city ; and when he walked abroad, many eyes followed him with reverential and eager looks. How we shall miss that marked figure, that cordial greeting, that eager look ! ”

“ God spared his life till all men were at peace with him.” It was not the peace of theological agreement except in a limited circle, but a peace conquered by a universal recognition of his great intellectual force, and of the fact that, whatever his doctrinal opinions might be, he was a power in the world of men, and an upbuilder in the kingdom of God. New England, however given to theology, is above everything else practical ; and whenever it sees a man serving the world in high ways, it approves and praises him. That Hartford named its Park for him was not because he secured it, but because he was a man worthy in all ways to give the name. But though at peace, he could not rest. He despised formal logic, but was the







Henry Bushnell





slave of reasoning logic. He would not have been himself, had he not entered upon a study of the Holy Spirit. It was the field whither his path led from the first. He had dwelt among analogies ; he came at last into that which they shadow forth. In this last year he projected a treatise on "Inspiration ; Its Modes and Uses, whether as related to Character, Revelation, or Action." The plan was a large one, but he could have made no other. Had he carried it out, it would have been rich in suggestion and prophetic in its outlook, but whether he would have compassed the infinite theme is doubtful. The world must wait yet longer, until its formal theologies are sloughed off or outgrown, and also until a study of man and of nature has furnished sufficient knowledge, before any man can duly lay hold of *That* which underlies all things, even if it be not the sum of all things. It still bloweth where it listeth, and no man can tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. The five brief chapters that were written abound in characteristic expressions, but there is not much that is in advance of his second discourse in "Sermons for the New Life," or of "Vicarious Sacrifice" (part third, chapter fourth). The outline is broad and clear, but the writing shows the limitations of strength. There breathes in it, however, a spirit of confidence and reality that makes it an integral part of all his previous work. His writing ends in the middle of a sentence, and after that we have only a few letters

and the recollections of friends to tell us of the remainder of his life. In the spring of 1875 he suffered a severe illness, from which he only recovered sufficiently to drive, and to walk a little. He spent hours in the Park watching the building of the State Capitol. He took some part in arranging for a new edition of his works, and showed his kindness and good sense in leaving out "Christ in Theology" as of no consequence, "being only the answer I made to my accusers." He insisted that the order should be that in which he wrote: "The only endurable way is to put matters historically, and let the free movement be always correcting itself." A great tenderness, which, however, was always in him, comes out in his last letters, especially in those to Dr. George Bacon, whose gentleness and intellectual keenness greatly won him, and all the more because he was showing signs of the same malady. The correspondent with whom he exchanged more letters than with any one else outside of his family was Dr. Bartol. The visible sign of their friendship came to a close in an exchange of letters here given, — eternal but not sad farewells: —

BOSTON, April 8, 1875.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — I hear of your increased illness. Accept my persuasion of your everlasting life and health. You and I believe in the same Being and Destiny. Should it be appointed for you to take passage first, take my love on board the wondrous vessel you sail in; and send such

token as you may, back to my soul, of your blessed making port.

From one to whom your inmost is dear.

C. A. BARTOL.

HARTFORD, December 31, 1875.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — Your very dear letter, which came to me last spring as a waft of fresh life, when I was just climbing up out of the river, has not been answered yet. Had it been less valued, it would have been answered sooner. But I have waited to be myself again; for just to put words together in the clumsy conjunctions of faculty benumbed, brushing off the dew of old remembrance in words that I would like to answer fitly, is no comfort to me or courtesy to them.

For the first six months I made only the slowest possible improvement; but since that time I seem to have been losing ground rather, till now it begins to be clear that your letter never will be answered, unless it should be true, in a sense not intended, that I am now the "half-way over;" for it really seems to me that a full half my faculty — the better and more capable — is somehow escaped, and that only the duller and more wooden part remains. However this may be, my boat swings drowsily, and I am no way disturbed or put to the strain by what is before me. Is it that I am believing less than I did, or more? Is it that I have found a way in behind the visions, where the *Word* of God is, and, seeing all in Him, hold everything easy and quiet?

Well, my dear brother, I will only say God bless you, and farewell. We shall touch bottom here shortly, and that, I hope, in righteousness.

With great regard that cannot die, your brother,  
HORACE BUSHNELL.

It is interesting to notice in Bushnell's letter the italicized *Word*. The two friends did not agree as to the person of Christ, but both could say *Logos*, and mean essentially the same thing. In Bushnell it was a final affirmation of the dominant truth of his life.

Little remains to be told. Early in 1876 the illness of the previous spring recurred, and he gradually sank toward the close. Not much is told us of what he said and did in those last days, but whatever we have shows a continuance and deepening of his strongest qualities. When too weak to leave his bed, he kept his cane near him, as a sign of his continued interest in the outer world. Symbol still! A constant humor overspread his talk; even his dying was "play" to him, — so true was he to his first great utterance. Of the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of St. John he said: "What a soft and sweet infolding of all highest things;" no common and hackneyed thought; such he never had. His household and the city were the last things that engaged his mind. On the final day of full consciousness it was announced to him that the Park he had conceived and brought to realization had

been named for him. When told that the poor Irishman who carried the message had said, "This is how we all wanted it to be," he responded with a smile that spoke his gratitude to the people. To his family he gave his benediction:—

"Well, now, we are all going home together; and I say, the Lord be with you — and in grace — and peace — and love — and that is the way I have come along home."

He died on the morning of February 17, 1876, at the age of seventy-four years.



## **CHAPTER XVIII**

### **ESTIMATES**

“He was a bold thinker because he sought for the truth. Near the end of his life, he said playfully, to one of his friends, as the two were fishing in the wilderness, ‘It is my joy to think that I have sought most earnestly and supremely to find and to live by the truth.’ He was broad-minded and many-sided, because he would look at the truth from every point of view. He was careless of traditions, because he sought solid standing place for his own feet. He was independent of others, because he must satisfy the consuming hunger of his own soul. When he found the truth, he applied it fearlessly to himself and to other men, to principles, institutions, and dogmas. He abhorred chams and conventional phrases in argument, because he believed so strongly in realities. What offended others as irreverent, often — not always — betokened his higher reverence for what he received as positive truth. He was also manly in the expression and defense of his faith. However he might appear to others, in the sanctuary of his inner self, there ever dwelt a prayerful, magnanimous, loving spirit toward God and man.” — President NOAH PORTER, D. D., *Memorial Sermon in Chapel of Yale College*, p. 8.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### ESTIMATES

WE devote this chapter to various tributes and critical estimates of Bushnell, confident that it is through the man that our readers will get at the theologian, or perhaps be led to forget the latter in the former. We have referred in the previous chapter to Professor Phelps' article in the "Christian Union," now "The Outlook."

"Three years ago it was my privilege to spend the major part of a summer vacation with this rare man in the Green Mountains. Some impressions which I received of his mental structure, and of his theology, and of his religious character, deserve recording. . . . Few men have ever impressed me as being so electric with vitality at all points as he was. He was an enthusiast in his love of rural sights and sounds and sports. In little things as brimful as in great things, he seemed the *beau ideal* of a live man. The supremacy of mind over the body was something wonderful. . . . The *abandon* of his recreations in the bowling-alley, where he was a boy again, and his theological talks of a Sunday evening, told the same story. 'Dying, and behold we live,' recurred once and again in listening to the conversations in which he was

sure to be the centre and the seer. I have never heard from any other man, in the same length of time, so much of original remark. One could not long discourse with him, even on the common things and in the undress of life, without discovering the secret of his solitude in the theological world. That solitude was not in him, as it is in some men, an affectation of independence. It was in the original make of the man. Nothing struck him as it did the average of men. He took in all things, and reflected back all things, at angles of his own. He never could have been a partisan. With many of the tastes of leadership, he could never have led a party or founded a school. Still less could he have been a follower of other leaders.

“It was obvious that his own ideal of his life’s work was that of *discovery*. When he had exhausted his power of discovery, — his ‘insight,’ as he was fond of calling it, — he had lost some of the prime qualities of power in communication.

“On the whole, he made upon me the impression of a mind *still in movement* on the central theme of the Christian faith; not doubtful so far as he had discovered, yet not resting in ultimate convictions. . . . He held himself to be substantially at one with the great body of the church in all that they really believed of the ‘faith in Christ.’ Yet whether he was so or not concerned him little. Truth lay between him and God, not between him and the church. The reception of it by other

minds was their affair, not his. Such, as nearly as I could gather it from his fragmentary conversations, was his theory of the true work of a theologian; rather of *his* work as a theologian; for he was very gentle in his criticisms of the work of other men. He had his own telescope, and they had theirs; that the instruments differed was no evidence that both might not be true; the field of vision was very broad. I am confident that he has gone from us with no such idea of his own dissent from the faith of his brethren as they have. And the sense of that dissent, I must confess, grew dim in my own mind when I came near to the inner spirit of the man. That was beautifully and profoundly Christ-like, if that of uninspired man ever was. Be the forms of his belief what they may have been, he was eminently a man of God. Christ was a reality to him. Christ lived in him to a degree realized only in the life of devout believers. I had heard him criticised as brusque in manner, even rude in his controversial dissents. Scarcely a shade of that kind was perceptible in him at that time. The gentleness of womanhood breathed in his few and cautious expressions of Christian feeling. The charity of a large fraternal heart characterized his judgments of men. His whole bearing was that of one whom time and suffering had advanced far on towards the closing stages of earthly discipline. . . .

“What shall we say of such men in our theological classifications? Where shall we locate them

in the schools? It will never do to set them aside as heretics, and leave them there. They are not heretics, in any invidious sense of the title. If faith means character, if 'the faith in Christ' be anything more than the most lifeless of ossified forms, such men are believers beyond the depth of venerable creeds. So much the worse for ourselves, and for the formulas which we revere, will it be, in the ultimate and decisive judgment of mankind, if our faith cannot find a place for such believers near to our hearts, because near to Christ."

Professor Phelps' letter is of interest as coming from one of pronounced orthodoxy. Dr. Bartol's, which follows, shows how well the "comprehensiveness" of Bushnell took in both men.

DEAR MRS. BUSHNELL, — No images and recollections of more delight could return to me than are suggested by your note. The first I saw of Dr. Bushnell was in the pulpit of Park Street Church, as he delivered his sermon on "Barbarism the First Danger;" and I think he was the earliest to make a picture of what America showed of *barbarity*, although his canvas was copied, and this feature of our society and institutions became a brand more conspicuous, especially in the matter of slavery, as Sumner described it in after-time. The preacher seemed a real divine and diviner, applying great principles to actual things with matchless sagacity, and a force too great for

Satan himself to ward. Such was the revelation in him of power, both to see and to say, that this Boston community, which then so moved all together it could carry but one rider at a time, was eager as one man for his voice, and willing to travel at his touch. Accordingly, he was sought with repeated invitations from Liberal quarters to expound Orthodox views. The Divinity School in Harvard University, and the college proper, begged him to fill special anniversary occasions in their service ; and certainly his Phi Beta Kappa oration in Cambridge, for originality, simplicity, and splendor, either as spoken or on the printed page, has scarce, if ever, been surpassed in the land. I soon found, in the close personal acquaintance which grew between us, that all his public ability had its roots in as rare a private worth. Never were honesty and ingenuity in any intellect more singularly blended, and, as it were, chemically combined. Born as he was to a creed, he could take nothing on trust. Outward authority, for a mind so active and penetrating, could never suffice. Necessity was laid on his nature to rationalize every doctrine or form. What he could not make acceptable to sound judgment and conscience, he would either waive or drop. He told me he had many questions hanging on pegs, to take down in turn as their time should come. He laid out his best theological strength to prove that no fit objection could arise to the old articles of Trinity and Atonement, rightly understood. I found him

never a Calvinist. He revolted from the notion, now so much discussed, of everlasting punishment. The great humanity of his heart could in no sectarian stress be made a sacrifice on the altar of a cruel God, which was no God to him. His various essays on "Christian Nurture," perhaps his most important contribution to the Church, have the true relish of that paternal goodness which is the richest common property of God and man. But his keen discrimination in defense of opinions he would retain as essential to Christian faith is, since the days of Jonathan Edwards, without a parallel. Possibly his explanations sometimes, like the subtilties of German metaphysics, escape the perception of the general reader, diverge from the track of the common sense, and are acute to excess. As we differed on points of dogma, it is natural for me to suppose that where I could not be persuaded, he failed. But his piety was profounder than even his dialectic skill. When he was my guest, it was some book of mystic devotion he chose, for recreation, to take up. It was no weak votary that religion had in this man. He had it in him to be an artist, architect, road-builder, and city-builder, as well as scholar; and well is your Hartford park called by his name. I have never known faculties so manifold in better order and under discipline more strict, or in evolution more effective and exact. They were the Lord's armory, in mighty and unwearied use for his cause. In our many walks, nothing, in streets

or buildings, Common or Public Garden, but was caught by his eye and had improvements suggested from his thought. In conversation, never was wit so sharp and more kind. In hours of weakness and ill-health, with his chronic cough, there was wondrous content, always good cheer and to spare. An ill-tempered or envious word never fell from his lips on my ear ; and that eye was so piercing and benign, I feel its admonition and blessing on me still ! The countenance, in its inward expressiveness, strongly resembled that of Channing. It had a play and vivacity all its own.

Playfulness I should call one of Dr. Bushnell's marked traits, seldom, if ever, exploding aloud. A native refinement kept him from public shouting or private noise. But some ghost of a smile seemed ever to haunt his face. If the remark was incisive which he was about to make, the wreath of good-humor was always the more protective and soft. The geniality began in his mind, and went through the expression of his features into his unconscious manner and slightest gesture. Indeed, it was his very atmosphere. The boy never quite left the man. Something even of the look of the babe was in the virile glance and tone. We threw stones off the shore, to see which of us could send them farthest or skip them best. He took me, one day, from his own house to Talcott mountain ; and no lad of fifteen was ever more decidedly out on an excursion, and to have, innocently, a good time. A wild nature in him, so sweet and good it would

have been a loss wholly to overcome it with any grace, leaped like a fountain and ran like a roe. . . . Riding with him one day in the cars on the way to Nahant, he left me awhile with a clergyman, rather of his own way of thinking, who very pleasantly tried to convert me. When Bushnell came back, he inquired of the reverend minister, "What have you been doing with my friend Bartol?" "I have not been doing anything but laying out the Presbyterian creed to him," was the reply. "You mean that you have been putting a shroud on it, I suppose; for that's what they do when they lay things out," rejoined Bushnell, with that laugh which always began in the gray eyes, and only left its last audible ripple, like a wave striking the shore, in his mouth. "Can a Calvinist be a Christian?" one evening, in company in my parlor, Father Taylor, the Bethel pastor, asked him. "Of course he can, and is," very soberly he answered. "But," said Taylor, "what if the Lord some day should come round to these saints in heaven, put there by arbitrary election and no merit of their own, and propose to *turn that end of the stick round*, by his own equally pure will, *into the other place*, would they be just as good Christians then?" Bushnell responded, with that flash of sympathy and twinkling glance, which showed that no denominational considerations hindered his appreciation of a fair hit, at whomsoever's cost the jest might be. His tenderness of heart blended and was wrought into his strong



sense, for a lightning-rod to carry harmless to the ground what might else become a crashing and destructive bolt of wrath. During the controversy, starting at Hartford because he had brought the ordinary construction of total depravity, election, and regeneration into doubt, which dates the truly *romantic* period of his history, I admired the pungency, turned by love into utter gentleness, . . . with which he said he desired to put his opponent into "an attitude of comprehensive repugnance," meaning that in the strife was no personal hate. I think he had no capacity, with all his eminent powers, for enmity. Goodness and wisdom were the elements that amounted to genius in him, by both being so great. He preached in my pulpit on "Unconscious Influence." He exemplifies his own doctrine, at least for his and your friend,

C. A. BARTOL.

Of like interest is a letter written to Mrs. Bushnell by the Right Rev. Thomas M. Clark, D. D., bishop of Rhode Island, who was rector of a church in Hartford for several years during Bushnell's pastorate.

PROVIDENCE, R. I., April 26, 1878.

MY DEAR MADAM, — About twenty-five years ago I had the privilege of knowing your husband in Hartford. No one could be brought into frequent contact with him, and not feel that he was in the presence of a man born to lead and not to

follow the thought of his times. He never seemed to talk with the view of impressing you with a sense of his mental or spiritual superiority; neither was there in him any affectation of humility or habit of self-depreciation. He could not help being conscious of his own peculiar powers; but one who heard him chatting in the bookstore (his favorite lounging-place after the work of the morning was over), with all sorts of people, upon all sorts of subjects, — the news of the day, the doings of public men, the affairs of the city, in which he took a special interest, politics, farming, mechanics, inventions, books, or whatever else might turn up, — would probably go away without suspecting that he had been in the presence of one of the profoundest thinkers our land has ever produced. No one could help being interested in what he said; for although he was not much given to wit and humor, he had a clear, incisive, original way of putting things that could not fail to attract attention. . . .

Few men ever enjoyed the art of mental creation more thoroughly. While he was writing his great work on "The Supernatural," I used to visit him at his study on Monday mornings, for the purpose of hearing him read over the chapters which he had written during the previous week. It was to me a rare intellectual treat, and I wish that I had noted down at the time some of the comments with which he illustrated his work. I also wish that I could have sketched his picture

as he sat there in his chair, somewhat uneasily, as was his wont, with his flashing dark eye and mobile face, that seemed to respond so vividly to the thoughts that flashed from his brain. When speaking under high excitement, his whole frame was set in motion, and he seemed to gesticulate with all parts of his body. I have heard him speak with some contempt of the technical graces of oratory, and yet he was a very effective speaker, — all the more so because he evidently forgot all about externals in the deep absorption of his subject.

It would be useless, in such a brief sketch as this, to attempt anything like a thorough analysis of Dr. Bushnell's mental characteristics, and it is a work that would require an abler pen than mine. I will simply note down a few things, as they occur to me, among the general impressions which my former intercourse with him has left imprinted on my mind. While he was etymologically a *radical* thinker, inasmuch as he was accustomed to go down to the roots of things, and his temperament always urged him forward in the pursuit of truth, his instincts were very conservative. He was very impatient of shams, and, at the same time, very cautious in exposing them, lest he might do damage to the truth of which they professed to be the presentment. This conservative instinct sometimes led him to qualify his positions in such a degree as might seem to weaken their force, and he would hold himself in check, and give prominence to the arguments of his adversary, in order that he might

not appear to disturb the equilibrium of truth. By some he was regarded as a subverter of old ideas, and even as a reckless and unchastened innovator and heretic ; but he was really very tender of all received dogma, and never broke away from the standards except under moral compulsion. I once told him that I thought of preaching a course of sermons on a topic which, twenty-five years ago, we had not learned to handle as intelligently and freely as we do now ; and I shall never forget how he brought down his hand with an emphatic gesture as he said, " I would not preach a sermon on that subject for ten thousand dollars ! " <sup>1</sup> Not that he was afraid to do it, but he thought the time had not come for its thorough ventilation ; and if he once threw open the door of his mind, it must be to let the wind circulate freely.

I always thought that he was more sensitive to criticism, and suffered more under reproach, than most people supposed ; with his organization, martyrdom in any form would have been a peculiarly severe ordeal. He never coveted reproach or pain, and yet he would have gone to the stake rather than sacrifice his convictions, — perhaps not with a loud song on his lips, but none the less firmly for that. . . .

Dr. Bushnell was a man of marvelous versa-

<sup>1</sup> Probably a subject pertaining to eschatology. Once when asked why he had not preached a sermon on the Resurrection, he said : " I do not wish to throw away my influence on other subjects by preaching on that."

tility. Those who know him only by his theological writings have no conception of the range of his mind and the variety of subjects that he had investigated. He was skilled in mechanics, and has given the world some inventions of his own. The house in which I once lived was warmed by a furnace which he devised, when such domestic improvements were comparatively new. He could plan a house, or lay out a park, or drain a city better than many of our experts. He was as much at home in talking with the rough guides of the Adirondacks as he was in discussing metaphysics with theologians in council. If he had gone into civil life, he would have taught our public men some lessons in political economy which they greatly need to know. If he had been a medical man, he would have struck at the roots of disease, and discovered remedies as yet unknown. . . .

Dr. Bushnell had a large amount of individuality; *the man* impressed you, and it would have required an effort to insult him or trifle with him. He had a way of puncturing bubbles which might well make certain people shy of him. There was nothing in his manner that seemed to claim veneration, as is sometimes the case with "distinguished divines," — no majestic sweep of the hand, or orotund proclamation of wise sayings, or assumption of superiority in any form; but you felt yourself to be in the presence of a *real man*, and a man of bulk, — not large in stature, but great in spirit.

I hardly need to add that he was a devout disciple and believer, — not one who merely speculated about religion, but also received it into his heart, and lived accordingly. He had all the spiritual power, as well as the far-sightedness, of a prophet ; everything pertaining to God and Christ and immortality burnt under his touch ; it was a live coal that he placed upon the altar. However he might speculate, he never allowed anything to come as a veil between him and his Saviour ; he saw eye to eye, and knew whom he believed.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

THOMAS M. CLARK.

It has been a special characteristic of the New England ministers that they have fostered all the interests of the towns in which they are settled. The separation of Church and State was only formal until the churches of the "Standing Order" were swamped in a multitude of sects, and the ministry lost its permanence and became a migration from parish to parish. Before this change, the minister was the leading man in the community, and shaped its affairs often down to the most practical details. Dr. Bushnell was a notable illustration of this clerical supremacy. Its chief sign in him is the Public Park, crowned by the State Capitol. He early noticed in the centre of the city a territory of about thirty-five acres that had never been put to good use, and was a deformity in shape and occupancy, and after years of effort carried

out his plan of transforming it into a park. The following action of the City Government, taken just before his death, tells the full story of his long strife : —

“ *Whereas*, The park laid out by the city in 1854 has not received any name ;

“ And *whereas*, The plan of using the land lying between Elm Street and the Little River for a public park owes its origin and successful execution, in a large degree, to the foresight, to the able and earnest advocacy, and the influence, freely and with generous persistence exerted in public, in private, and through the press, of Horace Bushnell ;

“ And *whereas*, It is wise and fitting that the name of a citizen standing foremost among those who have achieved enduring fame in the field of intellectual effort should be associated with the public works of the city, in which his manhood's life has been spent, to which he has been devotedly attached, and for whose adornment, improvement, and general good he has been ever ready to give his time, his influence, and the riches of his genius ;

“ Now, *therefore*, in recognition of a reputation in whose honors the city of his adoption shares, and of labors for the public good whose results will add to the happiness and welfare of every citizen ;

“ *Resolved*, That the public park now commonly called ‘ The Park ’ be and hereby is named ‘ Bushnell Park.’ ”

But the creation of the park was not his greatest service to Hartford. He himself treated it

even playfully. When asked where he would have his statue placed, he replied, "Under the bridge." Rev. Joseph Twichell, a warmly loved friend and his frequent companion in the Adirondacks in summer vacations, says that "Bushnell lies back of all that is best in the city. . . . He quickened the men who have made Hartford what it is. . . . After hearing him on Sunday, men would say, 'I've heard a great sermon, and I'm going to make my week mean something.'" Mr. Austin Dunham, a prominent citizen, said that "in nothing had Dr. Bushnell done so much for the prosperity of the city as in making men; he taught them to think large thoughts and to use their minds." His relation to his city is well described by Rev. N. H. Eggleston in a letter to the "Hartford Courant:"—

"It is his distinction that not only by an unequalled professional eminence has he benefited this place and forever linked its name with his own, but by the force of his genius he has been a benefit to the city in so many and such important relations. What interest of Hartford is not to-day indebted to him as a benefactor? Do we speak of schools? The fathers of those who are now enjoying our unsurpassed appliances for public and general education know well that the city is indebted to no one more than to Dr. Bushnell for the new impulse given to its schools, now more than twenty-five years ago, which lifted them to their present grade of excellence. Do we speak



of taste and culture? Who has been a nobler example and illustration of both, or who has by his just criticism and various instructions so aided in their development? . . . And so, if we turn to the business interests of the city, who of its older residents does not remember how, years ago, at a time when the impression had become prevalent that Hartford had reached its growth, — that it was declining while other cities were outstripping it in trade and business, and the younger and more enterprising were beginning to remove to other and, seemingly, more promising fields of activity, — Dr. Bushnell lifted himself up in that crisis, and asserted not only the ability but the duty of the city to prosper, and how, as it may be truly said, he woke the city to new life, and gave an impulse to its business interests which has been felt to this day? And so, not to speak of other illustrations of the fact, this many-sided man has made himself felt in this city in every direction, and in respect to every worthy calling and interest, as no other man has ever done. Hartford has felt him, feels him to-day everywhere. It may be doubted whether another instance in our own history is to be found of a man impressing himself in so many ways, and with such force, upon a place of any such size and importance as this. Hartford is largely what he has made it.”

The following letter, of recent date, from the Rev. Dr. Washington Gladden, reveals an even more interesting side of Bushnell’s history, by showing

how he stood related to an entire generation of young ministers in New England. It is no exaggeration to say that had it not been for the relief he brought to them on theological questions, many of the ablest young men in Congregational pulpits could not or would not have remained in them : —

“My acquaintance with Dr. Bushnell began in the early summer of 1867. Not long before that, a young minister in Illinois had been refused ordination because, as the council reported, he was tainted with Bushnellism, whereupon I wrote to ‘The Independent,’ defining Dr. Bushnell’s theory of the Atonement, as I understood it, and saying that if that was heresy, I wished to be considered as a heretic. The letter gratified Dr. Bushnell, and he wrote me a few very hearty words about it. I was soon to be installed as the pastor of the First Congregational Church in North Adams, and I wrote, inviting him, if his health were equal to the task, to come and preach the installation sermon. At first he hesitated, fearing his presence might compromise me, but I reassured him, and he came and spent about a week with me. The sermon was that noble one on ‘The Gospel of the Face’ in ‘Sermons on Living Subjects.’ I think it was then first delivered ; he was to use it a little later, on a similar occasion. He was at that time quite frail ; his cough was often exasperating, and he spoke with some effort, but the vigor and pungency of the thought and the dignity and sweetness of the personality made a profound

impression upon the audience. I shall never forget the electric tingle that went with some of his quiet sentences: 'Fire is the greatest analyzer in the world, and its product — ashes. Analysis requires dead subjects, but the Gospel is not dead and ought not to be killed.' 'One may preach a formula and know nothing about Christ, nothing but what is verbally stuck in his head or pigeon-holed in his memory. But the real Christ is what a man may be; what he shall signify in a man's heart; what he is in feeling and faith and guilt and bondage and everlasting hope and liberty that makes a sinner free. It wants a Christed man to know who Christ really is, and show him forth with a meaning.' The ministers present were not all quite free from suspicion of Dr. Bushnell, but as for the sermon, like the Sanhedrim confronting the good deeds at the Beautiful Gate, 'they could say nothing against it.' President Hopkins was one of the most attentive listeners. 'Is not that the Gospel?' some one asked him. 'Nothing else is the Gospel,' was his quick reply.

"In the days that he tarried at the parsonage among the Berkshire Hills we had many pleasant walks and drives together; the mountain air invigorated him, and the mountain scenery stimulated him, and the wit and eloquence of his talk was memorable. I ought to have written down those talks while they were fresh; they are mostly gone from me now, and I shall not bring them back until I see him again. His presence in the

house was a benediction ; we were young house-keepers, and all was simple and primitive, but he fell into our ways, and was as much at home with us as he would have been in a palace. He was up early in the summer mornings and out for a walk ; once when he came in, he said, ‘ I ’ve found the place for your park,’ and exhorted me to go to work at once and get the town to secure the site. It was indeed the very place for a park, and if the thriving city of North Adams could have it now, it would be a boon to her people. But my faith was not strong enough, and North Adams lacks its Bushnell Park. A year or two later he came again and spent a few days with me at the time of the Williams College commencement. He was now still more enfeebled in body, but his mind was as wakeful and alert as ever. All sorts of intellectual achievements were thronging his imagination ; how many were the things he wanted to do ! To the larger tasks he knew himself to be unequal, but he turned from them with no deplorings ; he could wait ! Sermon-making was not yet quite beyond him, though he sometimes thought so. Themes for sermons were always coming, like doves to his windows. ‘ I ’ve got a subject for you,’ he said one morning at breakfast, — ‘ “ Our Advantage in Being Finite ; ” will you write on that some day ? ’ It matters very little whether I did or not ; for strength was given him afterward to beat out the fine gold whose nuggets he had been gathering in the mountain twilight. In the

‘Sermons on Living Subjects,’ it bears the pathetic annotation, ‘Written for Yale College Chapel, but not delivered.’

“To tell the story of my indebtedness to this great friend would take more room than is left here, but I must say that I could not have remained in the ministry, an honest man, if it had not been for him. The time came, long before I saw him, when the legal or forensic theories of the Atonement were not true for me; if I had not found his ‘God in Christ,’ and ‘Christ in Theology,’ I must have stopped preaching. Dr. Bushnell gave me a moral theology and helped me to believe in the justice of God. If I have had any gospel to preach, during the last thirty-five years, it is because he led me into the light and joy of it.”



## **CHAPTER XIX**

### **THE WORK OF BUSHNELL**

"Dr. Bushnell had a creative mind of a high order, striking out a path of his own, an innovator, indeed, turning the mind of the churches into new directions, in order that they might escape the wearisome confusion bred by the old controversies, and yet aware also that the full significance of the old doctrines had not been measured. If he did not always solve the issues which he raised, yet he never failed to shed light upon them, revealing by his personal disclosure of his own religious need the positive directions which theology must take." — Professor A. V. G. ALLEN, D. D., *Religious Progress*, p. 11.

"I'm apt to think the man  
That could surround the sum of things, and spy  
The heart of God and secrets of his empire,  
Would speak but love, — with him the bright result  
Would change the hue of intermediate things  
And make one thing of all theology."

BISHOP GAMBOLD.



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE WORK OF BUSHNELL

IN his old age, Bushnell seemed to have entertained the thought of writing an autobiography under the title "God's Way with a Soul," but the following quotation is nearly half of the few "dimly penciled" lines left by him.

"My figure in this world has not been great, but I have had a great experience. I have never been a great agitator, never pulled a wire to get the will of men, never did a politic thing. It was not for this reason, but because I was looked upon as a singularity, — not exactly sane, perhaps, in many things, — that I was almost never a president or vice-president of any society, and almost never on a committee. Take the report of my doings on the platform of the world's business, and it is naught. I have filled no place at all. But still it has been a great thing even for me to live. In my separate and merely personal kind of life, I have had a greater epic transacted than was ever written, or could be. The little turns of my way have turned great changes, — what I am now as distinguished from the merely mollusk and pulpy state of infancy; the drawing-out of my powers,

the correcting of my errors, the winnowing of my faults, the washing of my sins ; that which has given me principles, opinions, and, more than all, a faith, and, as the fruit of this, an abiding in the sense and free partaking of the life of God."

This exquisite picture of personal history, while untrue as to his "figure in this world," is full of interest as showing what he valued in life, and what he regarded as achievement ; it was life itself rather than what is done in life ; his separate and merely personal kind of life was to him a greater epic than was ever written. The spirit of these words breathes from almost every page of his writings and constitutes their power. He is always dealing with life and striving to put it in the way to realize itself. It is in striking contrast with the older theologians of New England, who spent their lives in efforts to justify the ways of God to men rather than in teaching them how to justify their own ways before God. It is not strange that he seemed to himself to have been a small "figure in the world." His life was a simple one, void of striking incidents, and much like that of most New England ministers, even to the storms that beat upon him. Few rose to eminence who escaped them ; indeed, it was through accusations of heresy or attacks upon it that eminence was usually achieved. Nearly every memorable book on theology was either an attack or a defense. Bushnell came out of this general warfare less scathed, and with larger gains in his

hands, than any of his predecessors. But aside from controversy, his life was without special incident, save that it was overshadowed by disease during half his years. A critical reader would look for signs of weakness, but it is not easy to place the finger upon a page where his thought is qualified beyond the point where human finiteness would naturally affect it; it chastens and humanizes, but it does not color nor deflect nor depress it. There was in him a superabundance of vitality and of rough combative force that needed just this subduing influence. Without it, he might have been a stormy polemic, lacking in sympathy with an order of men and of things that called for gentle treatment. As it was, there was enough of robustness, but also how much of tender consideration and yearning fellowship!

It can be said of Bushnell as Professor George B. Stevens has said of St. Paul, "He challenged men to a new habit of thought." It was not so much to certain theological opinions that he objected as to a way of arriving at all theological opinions. He was the first theologian in New England to admit fully into his thought the modern sense of nature, as it is found in the literature of the century, and notably in Wordsworth and Coleridge. He was not a student of this literature beyond a thorough study of "The Aids to Reflection," but through this open door the whole spirit of that great thought movement entered his mind and found a congenial home. The secret of this

movement was a spiritual interpretation of nature. It was a step in the evolution of human thought ; and appearing first in literature, its natural point of entrance, it was sure to reach all forms of thought, as in time to come it will reach all forms of social life. The thing that the world had begun to see was that not only is the world God's, but that God is in his world. Bushnell was by nature widely open to this thought, and its undertone can be heard in almost every page of his writings. Each of his treatises is, with more or less distinctness, an effort to bring natural things and divine things into some sort of relevance and oneness. He took the path by which superior minds have always found their way into new realms of truth. They do not pass from one school to another, but instead rise into some new or larger conception of nature and start afresh. Bushnell, with the unerring instinct of a discoverer, struck this path and kept it to the end. He did not deny a certain antithesis between nature and the supernatural, but he so defined the latter that the two could be embraced in the one category of nature when viewed as the ascertained order of God in creation. The supernatural is simply the realm of freedom, and it is as natural as the physical realm of necessity. Thus he not only got rid of the traditional antinomy between them, but led the way into that conception of the relation of God to his world which more and more is taking possession of modern thought.

It is a popular impression of Bushnell that he was the subject of his imagination, and that it ran away with him in the treatment of themes which required only severe thought. The impression is a double mistake ; theology does not call for severe thought alone, but for the imagination also and the seeing and interpreting eye that usually goes with it. It is not a vagrant and irresponsible faculty, but an inner eye, whose vision is to be trusted like that of the outer ; it has in itself the quality of thought, and is not a mere picture-making gift. Bushnell trained his imagination to work on certain definite lines, and for a definite end ; namely, to bring out the spiritual meaning hidden within the external form. "These temporals," he said, "are the scabbards of the eternal, or the capsules in which it grows, as the matches whose fires are kept hid in their bodies" (Living Subjects, p. 269).

He bridged the apparent chasm between form and spirit by a theory of language, to which a previous chapter is devoted and frequent reference is made because it everywhere underlies his work. This conception of language does not discredit the rational faculty ; it is only another path for reaching a rational conclusion. A phrase in "Work and Play" indicates perhaps better than any other his real standpoint, and the spirit in which he worked : —

"No more will it be imagined that poetry and rhythm are accidents or figments of the race, one side of all ingredient or ground of nature. But

we shall know that poetry is the real and true state of man ; the proper and last ideal of souls."

This conception reaches to his style. It is made up of long sentences full of qualifying phrases, until the thought is carved into perfect exactness ; or, changing the figure, shade upon shade is added, until the picture and conception are alike. But with all this piling up of phrases, he not only does not lose proportion and rhythm, but so sets down his words that they read like a chant. It is varied, however, by frequent condensation into apothegmatic phrases, but the chant is quickly resumed, — a requirement of his nature, for it may be said of him that he thought musically. The harmony of one thing with another and of all things with the Life of all, subdued the play of his mind and his expression into likeness to itself. His style has been criticised as garish and extravagant, — a just criticism at times. He not only followed that sound rule of good writing, to lean heavily on the subject, but he sometimes overworked not only his subject but the best feature of his style. He always gave a fine loyalty to his theme, and laid the universe under tribute to it ; all realms were ransacked for material to uphold it, but not seldom with too evident remoteness to serve it well. The commonest fault in his writing is over-insistence, — a fault incident to his profession, and fed by the very nature of the end in view. The clearest marks of his style are its elevation and dignity. Not in all his volumes can

a sentence be found that falls below a high standard of these qualities. His discourse is always bathed in beauty and high solemnity, as though he saw all things in that light. Without comparing his style as to merit with that of Milton and Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, it may be claimed that he belongs to their class; he has the same majestic swing, and like them he cannot forbear singing, whatever he may have to say. His theme may be roads, or city plans, or agriculture, or emigration, or the growth of law; yet he never fails of lifting his subject into that higher world of the imagination where the real truth of the subject is to be found.

We come now to a more definite examination of his work.

The New England theology at no time assumed that a finality had been reached in theological accuracy. The Congregational Order, with its individualism and absolute equality, looked in the opposite direction and invited change. But it had reached a crisis through which it could not pass in safety. Re-definition and re-debating were no longer adequate to meet the new order of thought that had come in with science and the unfolding of society. Already a defection of the most serious character, and involving deplorable results for both parties, had taken place. On theological grounds it was more than half justifiable; on ecclesiastical grounds it was schismatic and had the weakness of schism. The Unitarian movement was clearly

without promise of success as a visible church. Its most brilliant leaders failed it in construction and outran it in critical denial. In its long list of great names, — poets, scholars, orators, preachers, statesmen, — none appeared with the disposition or the ability to lead and to construct. Extreme individualism and the rapid shifting of opinion in every department of thought probably explain this feature of the movement. Its justification and its weakness were that it was a protest and a denial. Being such, reconstruction into a corporate church life was difficult if not impossible.

Midway in this movement, Bushnell appeared on the scene. With no antecedents or environment to account for him, he stood out between the two parties under the impulse of his own thought, separated from each, but having a common message for both. It may be safely asserted that in the conflict, now almost a century long, Bushnell affords almost the only conspicuous example of an effort to compass both sides of the question at issue. Many efforts at reconciliation have been made, but the terms demanded have been the surrender of the other party.<sup>1</sup> It is not yet easy to

<sup>1</sup> Exception should be made of the Rev. Dr. George A. Gordon's able book, *The Christ of To-day*, in which the anthropology, the real field of the long debate, is treated with a fairness and freedom from tradition that deserve the consideration of both parties. Exception should also be made of the works of the Rev. Dr. James M. Whiton, and of many pages in the books of the Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott, whose voluminous writings, both as author and editor, have been of incalculable service, not less in clarifying the thought of both parties than in promoting a spirit



realize the importance of the position maintained by Bushnell. Less and less will his theological opinions be quoted, though they will not soon be forgotten, but his stand and method will more and more take on the form of a deliverance for Orthodoxy. One has only to read the pamphlets of Dr. Tyler and "Omicron" and the protests of "The Christian Observer" to see the gulf that was opening before it. The bequeathed contention of Edwards had already more than half yielded to Arminianism and modern thought. What would follow, no man knew. Relief was needed at four points: first, from a revivalism that ignored the law of Christian growth; second, from a conception of the trinity bordering on tritheism; third, from a view of miracles that implied a suspension of natural law; and fourth, from a theory of the atonement that had grown almost shadowy under "improvements," yet still failed to declare the law of human life.

The time had also come when a rational, scientific, cause-and-effect habit of thought was imperatively required, not only on these four points, but in the whole realm of theology. But the doctrines, even as they were held, were not to be cast out and trodden under foot. They sprang out of

of charity which combines the truth of both. Nor would we intimate that other writers in each denomination have not, from their own standpoint, done much by concession and mutual recognition of each other's strength, to heal a schism which Bishop Phillips Brooks said would not have happened if modern exegesis had existed in the early part of the century.

great and nourishing truths, the germs of which still lay within them. Bushnell undertook to reinterpret these doctrines, and to restate them in the terms of life itself; to find their ground in nature and revelation, and in the processes of the human spirit.

The question of revivalism will not be debated here; it was a phase in the development of the church; but when Bushnell assumed his pastorate, it had overwhelmed the law of normal Christian growth. Salvation had become a matter for adults, or for children under adult conditions. Baptism had lost its significance; the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was buried under trivial and debasing assertions; emotion outweighed reflection; the whole matter of entrance upon the Christian life was made to wait upon times and seasons and the most adventitious circumstances, even while all the means of grace and the full organization of the church were at hand. But at the same time revivalism brought life and force into the churches. It outran the tendency in theology, and became Arminian in its tone and its use of the will. It begot a spirit of action that led to missions and personal activity in good works. But it had no theory or law of its own; as a matter of fact, its working depended on individuals of a certain temperament, whose presence in a community seemed to determine the coming of the Holy Spirit. But this tendency to superstition was not so serious as the almost total obscuration of the historic doctrine as to the

place of children in the church, and the concurrent doctrine of the growth of the church from within by its own nurture. Revivalism was practically anabaptist.

Bushnell early fixed his eye upon the system, and slowly came to certain conclusions which he held substantially to the end. He did not oppose the system, but he disagreed with it at so many points that it was equivalent to opposition. His criticism, however, did not turn on details of method; he went to the root of the question by asserting that the church had forgotten the law of its growth. It is enough to say that "Christian Nurture" has slowly and quietly supplanted revivalism in New England, — not the thing itself, for it still lingers in a harmless and often useful and even necessary way, but it has taught the churches that the law of their growth does not lie in revivals, but in the Christian nurture of the young. The theological objections to it vanished long ago, and it has passed into the religious life of New England as a permeating and transforming influence. The revival system would have worn itself out in time through contact with modern ideas and methods, but it would have left the churches without a doctrine of Christian growth, and also without a working method. "Christian Nurture" furnished both, and saved the church from that worst of all fates, the loss of a vital doctrine without one to fill its place. But even a greater achievement of this book was that it so effectively turned the current

of Christian thought toward the young, where it is now going and must continue to go.

The next marked service of Bushnell to the theology of his day was rendered in connection with the Trinity.

It will not be claimed that it corresponds in value or even in kind with that rendered in connection with Christian nurture and the supernatural and the atonement. In each of these he fought and won a battle. On the Trinity, his work was a skirmish, and had only the value of a diversion, but it was greatly needed. The fundamental questions at issue between Orthodoxy and Unitarianism did not pertain so much to the being of God as to the nature of man.<sup>1</sup>

The real dispute was over the fall and depravity and regeneration. In respect to the last, Bushnell's influence as contained in "Christian Nurture" and the first volume of "The Vicarious Sacrifice" may be justly quoted as sustaining the protests of the Unitarianism of the day. That the real point at issue was anthropological quite as much as theistic is evident from the fact that Arianism was —

<sup>1</sup> "It must be remembered that the real point of controversy between the two parties in New England was the doctrine of Sin and the correlated doctrine of Conversion. The field of debate was Anthropology. . . . It is remarkable, although the Trinity and the person of Christ were nominally the subject of contention in the Unitarian controversy, how little of importance was contributed on either side to the elucidation of these topics. Even Norton and Stuart, the best equipped disputants, say little that had not been said before." (Professor George P. Fisher, D. D., *History of Church Doctrine*, p. 429.) ;

almost carelessly, it would seem — adopted as defining the nature of Christ, — a view of little repute in the world of thought. Unitarianism felt no passion for Arianism and very soon gave it up altogether, but it protested with unmeasured emphasis against total depravity, reprobation, and the inferno of Edwards and Hopkins. The flag that was raised, however, was inscribed with a denial of the Trinity, and Unitarian became the name of the movement. It was naturally chosen because it was easily understood, and could be effectively put to the people, — as that trinity meant three Gods; was a survival of polytheism; was derogatory to the Deity; that if apparently taught in one text of Scripture it was denied in others; that it was a contradiction, — three are one and one is three. It was under such a presentation that the Unitarian movement made its successful appeal to the people. There was much in the orthodox presentation of the Trinity to justify the criticism. The Nicene symbol was not understood, and Calvinism suggested, even if it did not assert, a distinction of persons that was not misnamed tritheistic. Never really held, it was often so preached that the imputation could not be denied. But however the Trinity was preached and taught, it was incorrectly taught, and so far as criticism went, Unitarianism was right. The situation was dangerous to Orthodoxy, especially at this point. On the real points of difference changes were going on that might have prevented

the schism, had not haste on one side and intolerance on the other prevented patience from having its perfect work. Edwards and Hopkins were no longer names to conjure with. Decrees had been softened into an Arminian sense. Imputation and reprobation and penal satisfaction were nearly "improved" out of existence. Human nature was not held to be quite so corrupt as Edwards had taught. The deepening sense of humanity, the literature it inspired, democratic institutions, and a better exegesis were busy in uprooting these perversions of doctrine. All would have been well in time, if time had been made a factor in the question. As the unity of God was the conspicuous postulate on one side and the Trinity on the other, the battle raged over that question so far as it was carried on by the people. Bushnell himself, in college days, had felt the difficulties of the orthodox position, and had lived in silent skepticism of it, to be delivered at last by his heart, but not restored to full orthodoxy. His position has been fully stated in previous chapters. "God in Christ" did not defend historic orthodoxy, nor did it place the doctrine of the Trinity where it stands to-day, but it served the purpose of a diversion against the charges of tritheism, and it checked the recasting of church creeds into tritheistic terms, — a measure that had been adopted to stop the growing heresy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is hardly necessary to say that each Congregational Church makes its own creed, and adopts it by a majority vote of its male

The next point at which Bushnell brought sensible relief to the thought of his day was that of miracles, or the supernatural.

He was early led to think of the relation between the order of nature and the fact of a miracle, and of course the first play of his mind upon it was skeptical; the prevailing conception could have induced no other result in him. The doctrine of miracles has been held in two leading forms. First, that they are to be accepted on the strength of the evidences as stated in Scripture;

members. The independence of the local church is grounded in an ideal conception of Christian personality; but while it favors and stimulates the development of character, it often makes sad work of it when it undertakes to check error by framing a definitive creed. It was an immense relief, especially to young pastors, to be freed from the necessity of affirming three metaphysical persons in the substance of the Godhead; and to feel at liberty to relegate the distinction of persons to the mystery of the Divine Existence without affirmation or denial; and to put in its place an "instrumental trinity" as sufficient for faith and practical religious uses. It was exactly at this point that relief was experienced. The subject was taken out of speculation, the ground of which was shifting from day to day, and made a matter of Christian experience. Whether Bushnell's view was correct or not, it was exceedingly workable: it brought God in all his fullness into humanity, and its patripassianism made it all that the human heart required for its personal needs. While it relieved the doctrine from the tritheistic cast that had gathered about it, it was removed *toto cælo* from the Arian conception of Christ that prevailed in eastern Massachusetts. His recognition, later on, of the central idea of the Nicene symbol did not weaken the delivering power of his first utterance, or indicate that it was groundless. He carried the doctrine out of a region where it was going to pieces, and brought it where only it can be made to stand, — the consciousness of the Christian life; that is, as he said, it is "a practical truth."

second, that the character and teaching of Christ are internal proofs of the reality of his miraculous works ; — Christ carries the miracles, and not the reverse. While there was an immense advance from Paley's view to that of Coleridge, — for such is the order in which the chief expounders of the two theories stand, — neither touched the real grounds of the doubt that had begun to prevail, because neither covered the relation of miracles to the laws of nature ; each theory left them in antagonism. It was here that doubt lingered, however much the figure of Christ might plead for faith ; it grew strong under a growing sense of natural law, and all the more because thought was rapidly turning to nature as a factor in the religious life of man. It was getting to be felt that the laws of nature could not be regarded as set aside as in the first view, or ignored as under the second view. Bushnell saw the difficulty with each, though recognizing a certain force in them. He was always ready to differ with Paley, an author whom he undervalued ; and equally ready to agree with Coleridge, whom he followed almost without question ; but he was a century in advance of one, and he had developed under the teaching of the other.

It is at this point our readers will perceive why, in these pages, we have continually spoken of Bushnell's steady appeal to nature and its laws. His vision was not full, but it was real. An excessive sense of evil and of its reach at times clouded his eyes, and he shrank from a view of



nature that included God yet was not transcended by Him, but he still saw that nature and the supernatural could not be put in essential antithesis, but must form "one system."<sup>1</sup> His method, however, was not to bring the supernatural down into what is called the natural, but to lift the natural into the supernatural. The point of contact was anthropological;—man is supernatural by virtue of his will; his consciousness of free-agency delivers him from the grasp of endless causation, and makes him one with God in freedom and creative energy. There are indeed passages in "Nature and the Supernatural" where nature is treated almost with contempt, and, as naturalism, is made the synonym of infidelity; but it is not nature itself that he has in mind, but the use and relation put upon it. When dissevered from the supernatural, and regarded as being in itself the measure of God and of all appertaining truth, he treats it with scorn, as revealing nothing, as without meaning, as a limitation and a debasement; but when made a co-factor with the supernatural in the one system

<sup>1</sup> "The supernatural, in its broadest sense, is that which manifests the operation of personality; so Horace Bushnell would have defined it. So we must define it to-day. In the narrower sense, it is that which manifests superhuman personality; only, whereas in former times the criterion of personal operation was understood to be lawlessness or caprice, in modern times it is seen to be at its divine perfection only in the perfect adjustment and adaptation of the law. The continuity and uniformity of the divine action should now belong to the rudiments of our faith in God." (Professor Benjamin W. Bacon, D. D., *The Church Union*, January, 1898.)

of God, it becomes its true self, full of light and prophecy and all manner of revelation, — “a vast analogon of the world of the spirit.” Thus viewed, the natural and the supernatural are not two worlds ; the antithesis fades out, and all things and all processes are divine. Such was Bushnell’s habitual look at nature.

This was the announcement that the age was awaiting from the lips of faith. The long debate over the will had come to a practical end, and consciousness was left free to assert its freedom, no longer entangled in theories of motives and natural causation. On the other hand, literature, political freedom, and evolution had forced thought up to a point where a new definition of man was required ; he must be relegated to the play of natural laws, — a thing with things, — or lifted into the divine order with God. The Incarnation had come to the front, and stood ready to be accepted or denied. It could be realized and fulfilled only under a conception of man that should ally him with God ; that is, he must be defined as supernatural. This is the work attempted by Bushnell. It will not be claimed that he compassed man’s nature and fixed his place in this still mysterious world, nor even that he defended his great thesis on wholly defensible grounds ; but he enunciated a conception of man, and inferentially of miracles, imperatively needed to save faith from lapsing into Deism, and from longer deferred realization of the Incarnation. Bushnell did not himself foresee how his thesis

linked itself with this basal fact of Christianity ; indeed, he said much that looked away from it, but later thought has taken up his essential contention and carried it to its logical conclusion, not, however, without aid from other sources.

But the immediate effect of "Nature and the Supernatural" was that of immense relief, felt especially by the younger clergy. At no point was the pressure of doubt in the fifties and sixties so great as in respect to miracles. Unitarian thought was fast lapsing into total denial, and, as at every step, not without partial justification. Science, with its dawning theory of the continuity of force, forbade an interruption of natural law. The perplexity was deep and general. Bushnell took off the pressure from either side. One was no longer forced to meet the charge of carrying a miracle in one hand and its denial in the other, and yet claiming both as from God. To all such Bushnell opened a door of relief in man himself, and said, "Here is the reconciliation ; enter and believe."

This view of man as a supernatural being, and of "one system," seems to have come to stay, at least in its main features. The physical interpretations of the world and of man wane and grow dim, and shade off into impenetrable mystery ; the spiritual grows clearer and firmer, and justifies us in claiming it as the abode of our life and the field for the play of its highest power ; the creative will is one with God's will. It is largely due to Bushnell that Faith can say this to-day

without meeting the charge of unreason. It is true that there still prevail conceptions of miracle as the violation of natural law, and also a crass rejection of the supernatural as a superstition, but the best thought of the day links them together and leaves them by the wayside. This thought, of which Bushnell saw the early gleam and was the first among us clearly to herald, stands before nature, the revelations of science, and the unfolding nature of man, in wonder and silence, confessing that God is behind and in all, and that his laws like himself are one.

The final value of this book is that it delivers us from the evanescence of the material world, and gives us a place in the enduring order of the will of God. Granting the antithesis between the transient and the eternal, the visible and the invisible, the natural and the supernatural, — and that there is antithesis cannot be denied, — the book finds a place for us under the larger factor. It makes us feel and confess the supernatural. Imperfect in many ways, it is still a spur to thought and a stimulus to the spirit, and by awakening a sense of ourselves as sharing in the supernatural, it prepares us for that conception of God and his relation to the world which lies before us to be realized and wrought into life and doctrine.

This much is to be said of Bushnell's work ; — whatever doctrine or subject he touched was left in better shape than he found it. He advanced the whole line of theology in New England without

creating schism. His wide and violent rupture with Orthodoxy is not to be regarded as out of the line of theological development. He did not make himself an alien in the world where he found himself. Its dogmas were essential to his denials; they furnished the only background on which his work can now be seen. This is eminently true of his last treatise, "The Vicarious Sacrifice," especially the first volume.

The governmental or Grotian theory of the atonement never took a strong hold on the thought of New England, and whatever strength it had was derived from the fact that it was a deliverance from the penal view, and also from the great ability with which it had been set forth by the younger Edwards, Dwight, Taylor, and other theologians of the New Haven School. It was a scholastic and not a human doctrine. It was far off and general. Simple souls wanted an atonement to sustain themselves rather than the government of God. It was not the maintenance of general justice that they felt the need of, but something that would help them to become personally just before God. Thought could not go on much longer with its over-emphasis of the atonement and its under-emphasis of the Incarnation without losing its relation to human society. The atonement as something done for and upon man, leaving him not an actor but a receiver, threw him out of gear with the modern idea of personality. This idea was rather to be found in the Incarnation, the inmost

meaning of which is divine Fatherhood and obedient Sonship. It means Christ, not dying for man to fill out some demand of government, but living in man in order to develop his divineness, or, as Bushnell phrased it, that he might become "Christed." It was getting to be seen that whatever Christianity is to do for man must be done through the Incarnation; that is, through the oneness of God and humanity, the perfect realization of which is to be found in the Christ. It is a truth instinct with action; it allies itself closely with human development and is a co-working cause of it. Now, it does not matter what particular view Bushnell may have taken at one time or another as to the nature of the Godhead; whether Sabellian or Nicene, his thought and teaching pointed steadily toward the Incarnation. Nor does it matter how he represented God in humanity; — He is there, and He is there because humanity exists eternally in God; and, being there, He must appear in created humanity. Bushnell's pages overflow with this truth; it is the backbone of his doctrine of the atonement. He not only brought relief to many minds who could not accept a penal atonement, and did not feel the force of the governmental theory, but he outlined, however roughly and with whatever of hesitation over side questions, that view of the atonement which has its centre in the Incarnation, and in the process by which man realizes his oneness with God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This view of the Incarnation is seen as early as 1849 in a letter to Dr. Bartol: "The tendency of German speculations and

The strength of his teaching lies in the fact that it was not a work of speculation, but a personal achievement. He walked in the light of his day. He lived, and he watched the on-going of his own life. He had great strivings within himself in his relation to evil and to God, and he had respect to the way in which he found peace. He went where all thought is to-day going for a knowledge of man, — to the facts themselves, to human nature, its needs and its relations, and made a "first-hand" matter of what had not been considered as within reach. In all this there was little consciousness that he had a part to play, except to clear a path for himself and for those under him. But being what he was, he wrought out the deliverance that the church about him was waiting for. He saved its central doctrine without rupture or a temporary eclipse of faith. We may or may not render formal assent to the moral view of the atonement, but as a matter of fact it is generally preached, and it underlies and enters into all the work of the church.<sup>1</sup> No change of religious opinion was

reactions, you have seen (as in Ullman's article on the 'Essence of Christianity') is towards the 'Incarnation,' the union of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus, understanding that union in its highest sense. I am confident that Unitarianism and Orthodoxy can never unite in any other point than this."

<sup>1</sup> "Thirty years ago, Bushnell's great work, *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, appeared and provoked a heated controversy. The author was excluded from many pulpits. But now his theory is more generally accepted than any other." (Sermon preached in Central Church, Worcester, Mass., 1895, by President George Harris, D. D., of Amherst College.)

ever more beautiful in its process, — silent, gradual, and making its way by its inherent reasonableness. It has not been put into dogmatic form, and it is to be hoped that it never will be ; it is the surest way to devitalize a truth. Less and less is there a disposition to make it a matter of speculation and definition. The reason oftenest given for hesitation is that it is a mystery, but the real reason is that it is felt to be God's own life in the world lived out under the laws of life ; to define it is like defining life ; when it has been done, you instantly feel that it has not been done. The penal or satisfaction theory is sometimes preached because it is tangible and has the apparent support of the Scriptures and the real support of the Westminster Confession ; but the governmental theory, though held in respect, is seldom presented as a ground for human conduct. The Incarnation has enfolded and drawn up into itself the atonement, where man becomes one with God in Christ Jesus. Sin does not draw God down to endure its penalty, or to maintain his government ; rather does He enter into humanity, — having it eternally in himself, — in order to save and regenerate it by participation in its life. This was Bushnell's teaching, and since his day the eye of theology in New England has been fixed on the Incarnation as the central doctrine ; and there it stands awaiting full development, and in natural alliance with all thought. Theism is shaping itself for its easy admission, and Humanity is opening its eyes to its own divine-



ness. The realized ideal of the union and oneness of the two will probably not be henceforth a subject for debate and definition, but will be regarded as a fact in the development of human history.

While a very definite effect can be ascribed to these four treatises, inducing as they did a new use of terms and new conceptions of truth, they did not measure the range and depth of Bushnell's work. It was not strongest in theological circles. He never came to be *en rapport* with the professional students of theology; they did not like his elusive use of language, and he did not like their way of defining; each had some just ground of complaint against the other. His appeal was strongest to a different order of mind,—the spiritual, the sympathetic, those who lived by the heart and knew by insight. It is through such minds that his influence has been deepest and broadest. Though not read so widely as he was twenty years ago, he is far more widely preached; he has become a part of the common thought of the church.

It was often asked why Bushnell did not go over to Unitarianism. The question was a natural one. As early as 1847, the year of the publication of "Christian Nurture," he wrote to Dr. Bartol: "I think you will find that I am able to appreciate some of the feelings and intellectual struggles of Unitarianism, and to look upon them with such a degree of sympathy as one who has

suffered the like may be expected to feel. I consider myself to be an orthodox man, and yet I think I can state my orthodox faith in such a way that no serious Unitarian will conflict with me, or feel that I am beyond the terms of reason." His four treatises separated him widely from the orthodoxy of the day, — a fact made evident by unmeasured criticism. They also seemed to favor much for which the earlier Unitarianism was contending, — a fact it recognized with cordiality. Why did he not cross the line? It is a question ordinarily not to be asked of a strong man; he does not change his religion or his church except under the direst necessity, but follows St. Paul's advice as to marriage, and abides in the state wherein he is. Nor would any discerning Unitarian have asked it at the time "God in Christ" was published. If the change had been made on the strength of that book, it would necessarily have been based — by the very term "Unitarian" — on the doctrine of Christ. So far as Unitarianism had a Christology, it was Arian; but if Bushnell departed in any way from orthodoxy, it was in the direction of Sabellianism, which is as far from Arianism as east is from west. Had he made the change on Christological grounds, he would have stultified himself and imposed on those to whom he went. There was enough to flee from, but not enough to go to. In getting rid of tritheism he would not have escaped polytheism, for this phrase can as properly be applied to the Arianism of

Channing as the term tritheistic to the Trinity of the orthodox.<sup>1</sup> Had Channing, whose genius did not lead to theology, adopted almost any view of Christ except the Arian, the movement of which he was the recognized head would have been far stronger.<sup>2</sup>

It must not be supposed that the Unitarian

<sup>1</sup> "It was not a mistake on the part of the orthodox to look on Arianism as in reality an introduction of a species of polytheism into Christian theology." (Fisher, *History of Doctrine*, p. 135.)

<sup>2</sup> "What was Channing's conception of Christ? Christ was a preëxistent rational creature, an angel or spirit of some sort, who had entered into a human body. He was not even a man except so far as His corporal part is concerned, but was a creature from some upper sphere." (Fisher, *History of Doctrine*, p. 431.)

Principal Tulloch says (*Ency. Brit.*, "Arians"): "The peculiar heresy known by that name has never assumed any influence, or regained, for any length of time, its influence in the church."

The Rev. Frederick Henry Hedge, D.D., one of the ablest and most learned theologians in the Unitarian Communion, wrote even more emphatically: "The Arian saw neither God nor man, nor a God-man, but a hypothetical being who is different from both,—a sheer invention, an unintelligible, ghostly chimera, whom one can neither repose in as true God nor sympathize with as genuine man. The Athanasian doctrine preserves the humanity intact, and even guards it with jealous care, leaving me at liberty, as my spiritual wants or mental habits incline, to fasten on the human or divine in the hypostatic union. The Catholic or Orthodox Christology is precisely that which, by the comprehensiveness and impartiality of its statement, allows the largest liberty of speculation, and admits the greatest diversity of view. It merely affirms what every one believes, who believes in Christianity at all,—that God and man wrought together in Christ for the regeneration of humankind. . . . The Arian doctrine, on the other hand, is a rigidly defined, abrupt hypothesis, intractable, insoluble; to be taken bodily, if at all, and held by an act of volition as a stubborn anomaly which the mind can neither historically adjust nor philosophically assimilate." (*Ways of the Spirit*, p. 76.)

movement was due to the force with which this crude doctrine pressed on the minds of men, even though, as Channing wrote in 1815, "A majority of our brethren believe that Jesus Christ is more than man." The immediate source of the movement was a reaction against the inhumanity of Hopkins and Emmons, or more generally against Calvinism, however presented. In short, the movement was not theological, but humanitarian, and was incorrectly named. If, instead, it had been named according to its nature, — by some other phrase than Unitarian, always a disputed or rather a universally accepted phrase, for no Trinitarian denies the unity of God, — how different and possibly how much happier the later history of New England theology might have been; and how much better fitted to enter into the conceptions of God and of humanity which the new century will bring before us! At present neither party has yet a theism fitted to cope with the questions they will be called on to meet.

As we look back upon the movement and examine it in the light of its Christology, it seems strange that it won any following; but when regarded in the light of its doctrine of man, it is strange that it was not greater. The former blocked the latter, and so it was all the way through, — a cross-play in which one thing neutralized another. There was scarcely a criticism or a denial that had not some ground and measure of truth in it, but in no case was it worth the price

of schism, whether forced by the Orthodox party or demanded by the Unitarian. It was a movement that ought to have been a reform instead of a revolution. The order of development was broken, and in the breach great truths fell out of sight, or were retained in old-time forms on one side, and ruthlessly denied on the other side; in either case the truth suffered. Bushnell saw all this; saw how just were many of the criticisms, how necessary each party was to the other; but he also saw that to have gone from one to the other would not only have been weak, but would have defeated the end which he most desired to bring about, — namely, a realization of the truth on both sides. A deserter in religion always goes away empty-handed. Dr. Bartol did injustice to his denomination when he said that Bushnell was a “fish too big for the Unitarian net.”<sup>1</sup> It was not that which kept him away. To a great man no place is small if the truth is there. He gave different reasons at different times for standing off, though never did he ever seriously contemplate taking the step; the reasons always involved a question of the Unitarian position on some fundamental doctrine. But the real reason was a sub-conscious dread of schism, and a clear sense that the germinal truths of Christianity are contained in historic Orthodoxy, though deeply overlaid and fearfully misstated. Hence, his whole work in theology was one of deliverance and recovery and restatement. He

<sup>1</sup> *The Unitarian Review*, September, 1880, p. 247.

had an instinctive sense that if anything was to be done by him, he must stay where the truths are and dig them out and set them in order, rather than go abroad on a crusade of denial under doubtfully inscribed banners.

In a letter written to Dr. Bartol in 1872, he says: —

“I have a certain pity, as I read, for what I should call your *unstandardliness*. I think of an egg trying to get on without a shell, and it seems to be a rather awkward predicament. I am very fond of liberty, it is true, but I should not like to have the astronomic worlds put up in it, even if it were given them to go by their inspirations. Liberties are good, inspirations are good, but I like to have some standard forces, to which I can advert when I get tired.

“Well, God help you, as He, no doubt, will and does. Here we touch bottom together, if nowhere else, and it is good, firm land.”

But if Bushnell did not go to Unitarianism, he served what was best and truest in it; and that it had goodness and truth he unfailingly recognized, better than if he had entered its ranks. Unitarianism was a general and specific denial of Calvinism, but it dealt no such blow as that which came from Bushnell in “Christian Nurture.” The denial aroused it to self-defense, but “Christian Nurture” induced its readers to forget it, — a process that has been going on ever since, until it is nowhere much remembered except in scholastic cir-

cles. So of the atonement; Unitarianism justly denounced the prevalent theory, but believers in a doctrine do not drop it because it is assailed. Bushnell gave them the "Moral View," a theory that satisfies all whom Unitarianism could expect to reach. The middle of the century found the doctrine of miracles in a weak condition, heavily attacked by critics and feebly defended by its friends. Channing accepted it. Theodore Parker omitted it, and suffered Christianity to settle down upon the simple order of nature. Whether right or not, the wrench to faith was severe and possibly unnecessary. Bushnell opened up a larger conception of man, and a broader conception of law that not only affords standing ground for honest doubts, but suggests grounds of belief that we may all be forced to accept. Thus the whole face of Orthodoxy was changed, and whatever was vital in it was retained and set to fresh use. A great deal of it was expelled by the introduction of new truth. Total depravity, decreed salvation, reprobation, a commercial atonement, magical regeneration, a mathematical trinity, — these are vanishing along with the inferno that tortured those who rejected them, or had not heard of them, and instead there is getting to be a theology, simple, humane, ethical in its main features, rational yet spiritual, natural and also supernatural, that confesses one God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and so holds to the oneness of God and humanity in the Spirit, — a relation through which

life and hope and salvation are revealed to all men.

It is not denied that Unitarianism, by its sincerity, its culture, its cheerful piety, and profound humanity, has contributed to this result; nor would we claim for Bushnell a totality of influence. The analysis of causes which evolution is now teaching forbids insistence on specific causes; change is the phase of a process behind which lie innumerable causes. The most that can be said is that one thing affects another. That Orthodoxy and Unitarianism have influenced each other is as clear as that neither is wholly right nor wholly wrong. But the degree of influence is a petty question, and indicates an intellectual and moral condition from which each side should pray to be delivered. The only question worthy to be raised is how to reach that ideal of truth which is higher than either has yet conceived, the first condition of the question being that they shall not quarrel by the way, nor sit down in self-satisfaction as having attained. Bushnell made no mistake in either respect; he was always kind and respectful to the side he would not join, and thought only of what might be if all could be brought into that "vein of comprehensiveness" which he claimed for himself. He seems to us to have been as catholic as he was intelligent in his faith, and more deeply grounded in the spirit than in the form of his belief; — not a common virtue at a time when fear and intolerance filled the air. He seldom came nearer to



censure than in the following letter to Dr. Bartol, written December, 1858, in answer to one in which Dr. Bartol states his purpose to review "Nature and the Supernatural:" "What I say of charity and liberty is in this view. Not that every man who calls himself a liberal, or rejoices in the epithet, is therefore off the balance. He is only on the way to be, and, holding on under that flag, he certainly will be. There is a certain under-force in words, which many make no account of, and which yet is too strong to be permanently resisted by any body. Thus there is a losing element in the type of the word liberal. I found it having finally an effect on me which I did not like; wondering not a little that Jesus, so abundant and free in the charities of his life, had yet the more than human wisdom to assume no airs of liberalism. No man or denomination of men can make a flag of that word, I am perfectly certain, without being injured by it. The under-force of it would finally move mountains. I want you to think nothing of me, and everything of truth. I don't ask you to be liberal to me; I am not so much as that to myself. God give you the truth and then the heart to say what belongs to truth."

The influence of Bushnell on theology was often a matter of question while he lived. "Christian Nurture" was soon perceived to be a useful book, but its theological significance was not as quickly detected. Public attention was so steadily directed

to his heresies and "tendencies" that it saw little of his real thought. His very gifts of imagination and style made him untrustworthy. But this estimate was chiefly due to the fact that he spoke slightly of system and the metaphysics that went with it. His break with method was greater than with the matter in hand. Since modern thought and criticism have prevailed, he has fared more justly, and has gained in standing as a theologian. The criticism of to-day does not pause an instant to inquire if he was orthodox or not, and almost as little does it care for his inconsistencies, but for impulse and tendency and general spirit which he imparted to theological thought, it cares a great deal. It was not his way to reject; he was never a come-outer; to deny and go away empty-handed violated his mental thriftiness; there must be some other way to find the path to truth than to leave the highway and strike into the open. He first found it in his theory of language; that put him into the atmosphere of the spirit, and also into the world of unfolding fact which had begun to move rapidly from one phase to another and always into growing light,—in short, into the world of modern thought. Almost every page of his writings is true to this theory; he suggests his idea, paints it, makes one feel it, and seldom goes farther than to say,—the truth lies hereabout; find it for yourself, and then you will know it. It is the achievement of Bushnell that he introduced this method of dealing with theology into New England in the actual

form of treatise and sermon ; it may be called the method of suggestion. It would have come in time, but it might have been too late for Orthodoxy.

There is little occasion to compare Bushnell with the great doctors of theology before him, but he had what they had not, — a unifying law of thought that delivered him out of the antinomies into which they led the church while seeking to deliver it from existing ones. He was a theologian as Copernicus was an astronomer ; he changed the point of view, and thus not only changed everything, but pointed the way toward substantial unity in theological thought. He was not exact, but he put God and man and the world into a relation that thought can accept while it goes on to state it more fully and with ever-growing knowledge. Other thinkers were moving in the same direction ; he led the movement in New England, and wrought out a great deliverance. It was a work of superb courage. Hardly a theologian in his denomination stood by him, and nearly all pronounced against him.

The recognition of Bushnell will grow as the theological crisis passes and leaves the New England theology of the past standing out in its full and bare proportions, and in contrast with that which seems to be taking shape under conceptions of God and man and evil and redemption that accord with modern thought and with the great law by which all things are interpreted. Then it will be

seen how pivotal was his work in a transition that will grow more significant as the contrast deepens between what was driven out and what was brought in. It will be said of him as Harnack has said of Luther: "He liberated the natural life, and the natural order of things."

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